

THE KING'S DEPUTY



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THE KING'S DEPUTY



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A Romance of the Last Century

BY

H. A. HINKSON

*Οὐ φεύδει τέγξω λόγον·
διάπειρά τοι βροτῶν ἔλεγχος*

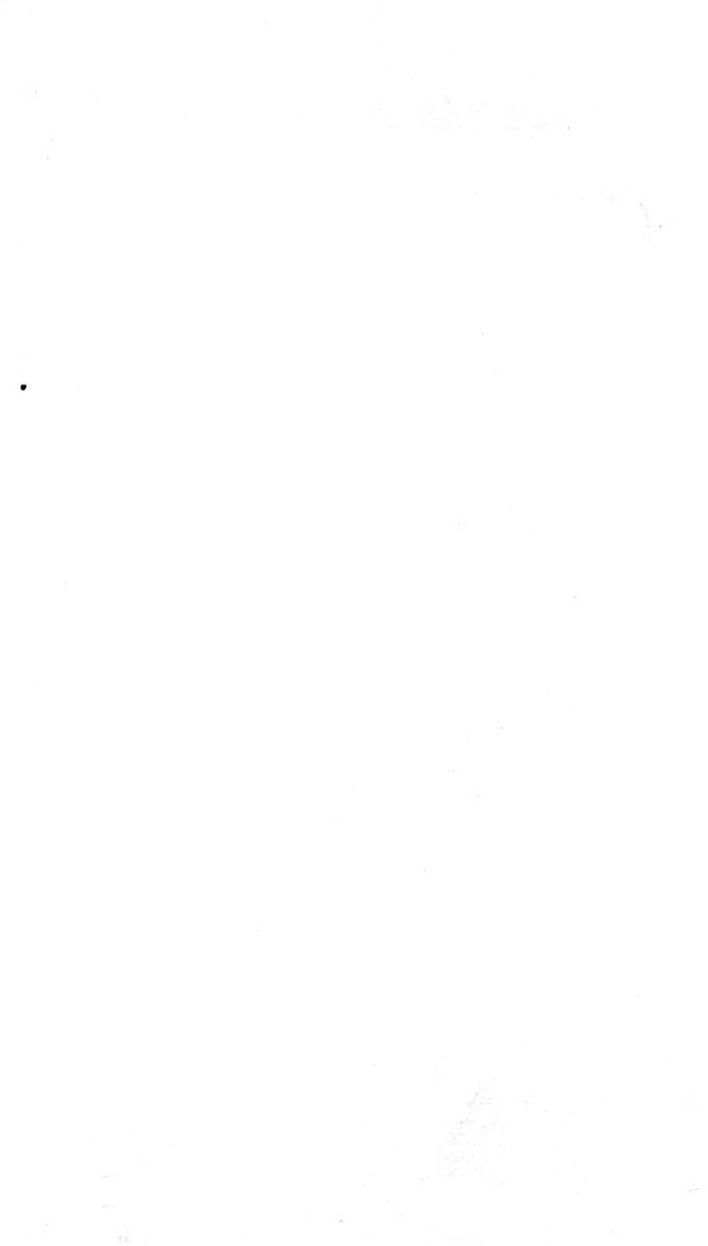
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CHICAGO

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1900



TO
MY FRIEND
ALICE MEYNELL

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THE KING'S DEPUTY.

CHAPTER I.

IN SEARCH OF FORTUNE.

I WAS well pleased when the trees of the Phoenix Park warned me that I was within a few miles of the heart of the city. Since I left Galway I had not seen the sun for rain and storm-cloud, and I had been now four days in the saddle. The wind still came moaning about me in gusts, but the rain had ceased, though the clouds scurried in heavy masses overhead. I drew rein for an instant and looked backwards, for I heard no longer the hoofs of my servant's horse behind, and, at this, I had no small concern lest evil should befall him and my baggage be lost. I pressed my hand to my breast to assure myself of the safety of my two passports to fortune—my purse, a not over well-filled one, but containing more guineas than I had ever before been master of, and a letter presenting me,

Theobald Dillon, of Carna Abbey, in the county of Galway, Esquire, to my kinsman, Donal O'Brien, of Dublin Castle, private secretary to Mr. Secretary Orde.

I scarce knew my cousin, for I had not seen him since my childhood. I remembered him a cold man of the world, with a bloodless face and white teeth. On the wall of the great hall of Carna Abbey hung the head of a wolf, and when a boy I never passed it by without a spasm of fear. Its sharp, uncovered fangs reminded me of my kinsman Donal.

I knew that my uncle Tony had wrote the letter, wherein he commended me to the good offices of Donal, with much difficulty, and because there was nought else to be done, seeing that I had no patrimony to speak of, and that good birth is but a sorry excuse for an empty purse. Moreover, I had lived twenty-three years, and had learned those things which it is right for a gentleman to know, so that I needed no sponsor for my quarrel, being grown big and strong to boot.

For myself, I had liefer go to my cousin, Lady Betty Rawdon, who was by repute, indeed, the fairest lady in Dublin, and the leader of its fashion. Nay,

I had even heard it whispered by certain who had been to Court, that his Excellency himself was far from indifferent to her charms. But my uncle Tony and she had quarrelled, and very bitterly I made no doubt, seeing that he did not curse her, as he did others who displeased him for the time, but, if her name was spoken, listened in a gloomy silence.

These matters I pondered as I rode slowly to the city beneath the dripping trees, while my servant Barney lagged out of sight behind me. As I came near to the city, I began to think what a figure I should make when I was arrived there. I have said that I was well mounted.

I rode a bright chestnut gelding, which my uncle had bought me at Athlone not ten days before. I wore my father's sword, and knew how to use it, while in my holsters was a pair of horse-pistols with silver stocks. Barney, too, carried a case containing a pair of duelling pistols, which my uncle had given me on the morning when I took my leave of him. His hand had trembled as he gave them to me, and I thought that I saw in his look something of envy of me and of my youth.

“Never court and never shirk a meeting, Toby,” he said, “and you’ll never want a friend while you have Spitfire and Flash,” for so they were called, and with that he sighed heavily.

His kindness touched my heart, for I knew that he loved his pistols as a father his children. It was no easy matter to part with them, for Tony Dillon had laid his man oftener and with a better grace than any in the county of Galway. But gout had made his aim less steady, so that he fought seldom and never any longer with his friends, except when he was driven to it.

The rain began to fall again, and I was grown impatient, because my servant lagged; and yet he was not to blame for that, seeing that he was heavily laden and not so well mounted as I. Neither was the road without danger to a single traveller, especially if the night was dark. And so, thinking of this, I was all the more glad when the good fellow came in sight.

We had now left the Phoenix Park, and, with what speed we could, rode along the dark ill-made street by the river. It was not long before we had reached the Angel tavern, for at that famous inn my uncle had

commanded me to seek my supper, as being but a few paces from the house wherein I was to lodge.

I leaped from my saddle, and throwing the rein to Barney bade him see that the horses should be well stabled. Then I pushed open the heavy door and entered the great room of the inn. The confused noise of voices, in which laughter, jest, shouting, and cursing were strangely blent, almost deafened my ears.

The air was dull with smoke and steam, and heavy with the smell of food and wine. No seat could I discover that was vacant, and as I stood by the door I had leisure to scan the company. It was indeed a strange assemblage. Men of all ages and, as it would seem, of every condition of life, crowded together at the tables. Young men of rank and fashion, elegantly dressed, their hair freshly powdered by the friseur—some of them scarce past the term of boyhood, who watched with pale faces and eager eyes the fall of the dice or the turn of the trump card—made a strange contrast to the heavy-eyed and leaden-visaged companions, whose wine-stained dress and tarnished finery might have indicated their condition, even had not the sword point, protruding from the

scabbard, proclaimed them Sweaters and Pinkindies.

As I stood by the door hesitating, uncertain whether or not I should seek my supper elsewhere, careless eyes were raised from the tables. They glanced at me for a moment and then were drawn again to the play. One of those who played near me attracted me much.

He was a young man, scarce more than my own age. His face was pale, but exceeding handsome, and his eyes, which were dark and lustrous, seemed tired, as though he had drunk deep and slept little. Yet he had withal an air of breeding which made him notable among his fellows. His dress was singularly elegant, his coat being of light blue and his waistcoat of yellow silk laced with gold. His hair, which I took to be his own, was newly powdered, and gleamed white as snow by the side of the soiled and gray-coloured wigs of his companions.

I felt something like envy to think of my own rustic appearance—for my clothes were plain and travel-stained, and I wore my own hair, which was brown and abundant, and of which till now I had been

proud, unpowdered—and of my country manners, and the splendour and ease of this young town-bred buck. As if he knew that he was in my thoughts he raised his eyes for an instant to my face and made as if he would speak—at least, so I read his half gesture, but as he did so, one spoke to him and he turned his eyes from me.

Then he bit his lip, and with a flush on his pale face drew forth and flung on the table a handful of gold coins. At this moment, a little round-faced man touched my arm, and in a voice which betokened pride, as well as humility, begged to know if my lordship would go up higher where a table was at my service. I followed mine host, for the voice belonged to none other, up the room, jostling on the way the heated servants who hurried to and fro, bearing wine or empty goblets, their steps being quickened at times by the point of a sword thrust delicately against their ribs or back.

I sought a seat at the table which stood near to a great fire of wood that leaped and crackled like a live thing with every gust that shook the old inn and made the windows rattle.

I had almost reached the end of the room when I tripped over something that lay in my way, and almost fell on my face. When I had recovered myself I looked down and saw that the cause of my stumbling was a sword and scabbard, which, with the belt, had been thrown carelessly against the back of the bench. Turning to him who was nearest me, and whom I judged to be the owner of the sword, I craved his pardon for my awkwardness, albeit I knew that his carelessness was more at fault.

“Your sword, sir,” I said, “has well-nigh brought me to earth.”

“True, sir,” he answered, with cold gravity, “and, indeed, you are not the first to meet a fall by that same plaything o’ mine, but by Gad, sir, you have the advantage over them that did.”

“How so, sir?” I asked, curtly, for I was little pleased with his manner of speech.

“Young sir,” he retorted, surveying me from head to foot with much insolent contempt, “when you have lived twenty-four hours in the city, you may perchance learn; but if you can find no instructor, I shall be at your service,” and he waved his hand,

dismissing me as though he were a king and I his vassal, at which, and, it may be, at my anger, his companions laughed aloud.

Bursting with indignation, which I was at much pains to contain, for I was resolved not to be drawn into a brawl, I made him a slight bow and passed on.

As my anger cooled, I felt a strong desire to know who this braggart might be, who had spoken so threateningly. His appearance, and the deference with which his companions listened to his boasting, puzzled me not a little. He was, I judged, about fifty years of age, of great stature and corpulent. His face would have been handsome but for a scar which seamed the left jaw from the ear to the mouth. His dress was at once tawdry and magnificent. He wore a coat of plum colour, the back of which I saw when he leaned sideways was soiled with powder and pomatum from his wig; his waistcoat was of blue satin, but much stained with wine. He wore black silken stockings and shoes with silver buckles.

His companions at the same table, of whom there were four, were less splendidly attired, but all had the air of men of fashion.

When I had supped and paid my reckoning, I was about to leave the inn and seek Barney, about whom I had some disquiet, for my servant was ready not less with his hand than with his tongue. I had half risen from my seat when I heard one at the table near me speak of my kinsman Donal O'Brien, and at the name I dropped back into my seat again and listened.

What they said of my kinsman I could not tell for the rattle of the dice, but that it was nothing friendly I judged by what I saw of their faces. Then it chanced that a die rolled from the table to the floor. With a curse, he who sat at the end of the table, the same over whose sword I had stumbled, cried out to a servant and bade him find the die, for it was his hand that had erred. Now that the dice were silent I could hear.

“His Excellency did not honour Lady Betty with his presence at her ball last Thursday,” one was saying. “I’ll warrant Mr. Under-Secretary feels none too happy for that any more than her ladyship.”

He of the plum-coloured coat burst into a roar of derisive laughter.

“Much wine has blunted your wits, Dick Power,” he cried, so loudly that many eyes were turned on him. “Why should my lord duke trouble to show himself in her ladyship’s ballroom when he has the private *entrée* to her chamber?”

Instantly the meaning of the fellow’s words and of my uncle’s silent unfriendliness towards my cousin flashed through my brain. A chorus of laughter followed which sounded in my ears like the noise of hell.

I rose to my feet, and seizing my cup, still half filled with wine, I took a step forward so as to make my aim more sure, and dashed the wine full in the face of Lady Betty’s traducer.

For several moments there was silence, the party at the table seeming thunderstruck at the suddenness of my attack, while I stood with a calmness that afterwards no little surprised me, and watched the wine trickle down the braggart’s resplendent waistcoat. Then with the roar of a baited bull he drew on me. Happily I was of a county famous for the sword as was Tipperary for the pistol, and the hilt came readily to my hand. I parried a desperate thrust and retreated to the fireplace, where a wider space

might give the advantage to my youth and activity. So I defended myself, acting with caution until I should learn his manner of fighting.

The guests had now left the tables and crowded behind my antagonist, watching the contest with eager delight. How the fight might have ended I know not, if mine host had not struggled through the crowd, which was fain to hold him back lest he spoil their sport, wringing his hands, and crying out to both of us, but more especially to my antagonist—

“Put up! put up, gentlemen! Think of my house! For God’s sake, peace! for the honour of my house.”

At these words, my enemy retreated a step and ceased to press me. Then, dropping the point of his sword, he burst into a loud laugh.

“For the honour of so excellent a tavern, good Peter, it shall be as you wish,” he said to the trembling innkeeper. Then, turning to me—“Sir,” he added, with great coolness, albeit his breath came fast because of his corpulence, “we shall meet again at a more fitting time and place.”

“When and where you will,” I answered, with equal haughtiness.

He bowed slightly, and returning his sword to the scabbard he whispered something in the ear of him whom he had addressed as Dick Power. The angry murmurs which had broken out, in fear lest the quarrel should end thus tamely, were stilled in expectation. I was still standing by the fire, with the naked blade in my hand, when Mr. Dick Power presented himself to me with a low bow and begged that I would give him the name of a friend. I was now placed in a position of much embarrassment, for I knew no one whom I could ask to render me this service, save my kinsman Donal, and I had the best of reasons for desiring to keep him in ignorance of this unlucky brawl. I hesitated before replying, and the crowd, misinterpreting my silence for cowardice, broke out into laughter and jest which stung me almost to madness.

Mr. Power stood waiting before me with a smile, and this no less exasperated me.

“Sir,” I answered, in a loud voice, so that all might hear, “being newly come to the city, I need some little time ere I can find a friend. My name, sir,” for they had begun to cry out against me, “may per-

haps give you warrant that I shall not fail in aught that befits a gentleman and a man of honour. It is Theobald Dillon, of Carna Abbey, in the county of Galway, now lying with Francis O'Keefe, vintner."

While I spoke the young man whom I had seen at the card-table near the entrance to the room, and whose bearing had so caught my eye, pushed his way through the throng to my side.

"Sir," he cried, in a clear musical voice, "while Tom Delahunt lives, a Dillon of Carna shall never want a friend—or a mourner. My poor services are at your disposal."

I bowed, partly to express my grateful acceptance of services so timely and partly to conceal my surprise, for Tom Delahunt was known, even in Galway, as the most dare-devil of the brethren of the Hell Fire Club; and report had not dealt too kindly with his reputation, albeit there was none rash enough to gainsay his courage or spirit.

But indeed I was in no position to be over-captious, so that I readily accepted the offer of my new-found friend, for in truth he was a friend to me in my sorest need. At this Mr. Power bowed and left me. When

he had turned his back and mingled with the crowd, Mr. Delahunt seized my arm and drew me back a little, so that we might not be overheard.

“You are new to the city, sir?” he asked.

I answered him that I was.

“Then take the advice of one who knows it well—and to his cost, having bought his knowledge at no little loss to himself. Leave the inn with all speed, for there are certain fellows here who are not to be trusted.”

“I would not have them think that I run from them!” I replied, a little hotly.

“That they shall not,” he answered, with spirit, “seeing that you are my friend. Yet it puzzles me why you should have come hither.”

“My uncle Tony bade me seek my supper here,” I said.

“Ah! did he so?” he went on, seeming to be much interested. “And you have supped well?”

“With much relish,” I answered, smiling.

“’Tis true; but you have not yet paid your reckoning,” he said, watching my face.

“I am very ready to pay my reckoning—what is

still unpaid—seeing that I have gained more than I had bargained for,” I answered.

“And that?” he asked, smiling.

“The friendship of Mr. Tom Delahunt,” I replied, making him a bow.

His face flushed.

“Why, it is gladly given to a kinsman of Tony Dillon and a man of spirit,” he returned.

Then I told him again where I was lodged, and entreated him that he would not forget the business, since my honour was at stake.

“Have no fear, I will answer for your honour. And now make haste away, lest the Captain of the Watch find you here and interrupt the business.”

So, I thanked him for his warning, and, bowing to him, went out.

CHAPTER II.

A FAIR DOMINO.

As soon as I reached my lodging I made haste to change my travel-stained garments for those more befitting my station. So, very quickly I donned my new suit—a coat of chocolate colour with rich lace, a waistcoat of blue brodered with silver, black knee-breeches and silken hose of the same colour, and shoes with silver buckles. I surveyed myself in the mirror, and, notwithstanding that my hair lacked powder to be in the fashion, I felt no dissatisfaction with my figure.

Now that my blood was cooler, I confessed that a brawl in a tavern would be no favourable introduction to his Excellency's favour should he hear of it. If I failed to obtain the commission on which I had set my heart, I could at least seek service abroad, as many of my kinsmen had done, and this was some comfort. Then I fell to thinking what would my uncle Tony say in the matter. That he had crippled himself

much to equip me in a manner befitting my birth I well knew, and if I must give up the hope of serving in my own country it would be a bitter disappointment to him. And yet, albeit he showed no goodwill towards my cousin, Lady Betty, he would be far from blaming me for resenting the foul insult which had been offered to her so publicly.

I remembered suddenly that I did not know the name of my antagonist, and it seemed somewhat strange that he should have neglected the formality of declaring it; and yet his vanity in supposing himself to be well known to all the world might have accounted for the omission, or, indeed, it might be that the suddenness of the quarrel had left no leisure for courtesy. But this did not disquiet me, seeing that I had not been born and, for twenty-three years, bred in the county of Galway without having smelt powder.

I rose and took my uncle's duelling pistols from their case. They were of the kind called pelters, and of brass, with the barrels very long, and point-blankers. They were family pistols, and had descended to the eldest son of the house, and my uncle,

because he had no children, had given them to me, when I had used them to his pleasure and knew the code as well as a gentleman ought. As I was the challenged party, the choice of weapons was mine, unless my antagonist pleaded that he was no pistol shot, and that I deemed to be far from probable. I would choose pistols, Galway bred though I was, for my challenger was of uncommon stature and width, and—why should I not confess it?—from my experience in the tavern I judged that what there was of advantage was not on my side. I noticed with grim satisfaction the notches cut in the stocks; a little cross told when the shot had been fatal, and of these on *Spitfire* I reckoned twenty-three, the number of my own years. When the wound had not proved fatal, it was marked by a simple notch. I examined both carefully, testing the hair springs more than once before I restored them to the case. As I did so there came a knocking at my door. Doubtless it was Mr. Delahunt, I thought, as I strode across the room and flung open the door.

For a moment surprise bereft me of the power of speech. It was no man, but a woman, who stood

before me, and a young and comely woman at that, I judged, albeit the light was none of the best, and I could see only her mouth and chin, and that but dimly by reason of the domino which she wore, and from which her dark eyes shone like stars from a winter sky.

For several minutes we stood gazing the one at the other without speaking, for in truth I knew not what to say.

“Mr. Theobald Dillon,” she began at last, in a low, clear voice, which sounded like the first notes of a thrush’s morning song.

“Bids you heartily welcome to his poor lodging,” I said, with a low bow, and made way for her to enter.

She hesitated awhile, looking doubtfully into the room. Then, as if with sudden resolve—

“I would speak with you in private,” she said, daintily crossing the threshold, “and so I would not be overheard,” and with that she glanced at my sleeping chamber. By the light of the candles I saw that she was richly dressed in brocaded silk, while she wore on her little feet satin shoes with bows of pink.

“Have no fear of that,” I answered, and, to give her greater confidence, shot the bolt of the door by which she had entered.

She turned her eyes on me quickly, a little disquieted I thought; then, catching sight of the pistols, for I had left the case open, she moved quickly toward them.

“Are they loaded?” she asked.

I read what was in her mind.

“Madam,” I said, with some haughtiness, “I am a man of honour.”

What I could see of her face coloured somewhat.

“Forgive me, sir,” she asked, very sweetly. “I am but a girl, and a woman’s honour is lightly tarnished. In truth, I am but a sorry pleader to make a foe where I seek a friend. I would ask a favour of you, but I know not how.”

“Your desire is granted,” I cried, for the music of her voice had taken me captive, “if it be aught that depends on me.”

Her eyes met mine questioningly.

“In very truth?” she asked, eagerly.

“In very truth,” I answered.

“Sir,” she said, coming closer to me until I could feel her breath upon my cheek, “I will hold you to your pledge. You will grant me what I desire?”

I bowed, for I much wondered what was this thing which she so desired that she had come to me alone to ask it, and I had not leisure for words.

“You had a quarrel to-day—in a tavern close by, and drew upon a stranger,” she went on.

“To defend my life,” I answered. “It is true, though I know not how you came by the news so speedily.”

“You will choose pistols?” she asked, with a glance at those that lay before her.

“Yes,” I replied, flushing as I remembered my thoughts of a little before.

For a few moments she stood by the fire, leaning a little forward, her forefinger on her lip. Then she roused herself suddenly, and came nearer to me.

“When you meet,” she said, quickly, “you must fire dumb.”

“Fire dumb!” I exclaimed, startled out of my calmness. “My God, fire dumb! Do you know what it is that you ask?”

“Yes,” she answered, quietly; “I know well what it is, and that you have given me your word.”

“It is forbidden——” I began.

“Yes,” she continued, with great calmness, “by the Code of Honour, but what of that? It is no dishonour if—if——” and she hesitated.

I waited until she should finish.

“If you risk your life,” she said, watching me closely.

“I care nothing for the risk,” I answered, proudly, “but a lady’s honour——”

“Ha, a lady’s honour, sir,” she repeated, and her surprise assured me that she knew not the cause of my quarrel.

“Yes,” I went on. “How shall I fire dumb when it is a lady’s honour that is at stake?”

I thought she winced.

“And yet, sir,” she persisted, “the Code regards such offences but lightly.”

Her knowledge of what we in Galway were wont to call the Thirty-six Commandments amazed me.

“It may be so,” I answered; “but I take no such view of the matter.”

"Yet you have pledged me your word," she said again.

"Yes, to my own destruction, if you hold me to it," I cried, throwing myself moodily into a chair, and covering my face with my hands.

"Destruction, sir!" she exclaimed, and I thought that there was mockery in her voice. "Nay, rather to your own salvation."

"How so?" I asked, raising my head and looking at her in amazement. It may have been my gaze that confused her, for she seemed awhile to have no answer ready.

"Because you will have been true to your pledge," she said, slowly, "and earned a daughter's gratitude for her father's life. You will keep your promise?"

"I will so," I answered, readily enough, for her appeal to my mercy touched my heart, and when I bethought me that my antagonist was an old man, to fire dumb no longer seemed to be so great a disgrace. Moreover, I now knew what I had before but dimly suspected, that she was pleading for a father's life.

"And thus, kind sir," she answered me humbly, "a daughter thanks you, as she ought, upon her knees,"

and before I could prevent her she had dropped lightly to the ground.

“Nay,” I said, taking her gloved hands and raising her up, “not thus shall you thank me.”

“How then, sir?” she asked, her eyes downcast.

“I would remember your face,” I answered her.

“It may not be, sir, seeing that I would have you forget my visit,” she said, yet in such a manner that I was encouraged to persist.

“If I grant you your desire to see my poor face,” she went on, seeing that I would not take her nay, “will you promise me upon your honour never to betray the secret of my visit, and, if we meet again, to forget that we have ever met before?”

“I promise upon my honour,” I replied, humbly.

She raised her hands suddenly to her head, and in an instant the hood of the domino fell back, and revealed her face turned towards mine with a smile, half coy, half mocking. Her beauty and the splendour of her eyes dazzled me an instant. I think she knew it, and was in nowise displeased thereat, for the colour in her cheeks grew deeper. She made me a low courtesy and then quickly replaced the hood.

“ I wish you good-night, sir,” she said, as she turned towards the door. “ I have already outstayed my time, and perchance your patience.”

I opened the door, and would have accompanied her to the street, but she forbade it somewhat imperiously. Her maid awaited her, she said, and her chair was but a little way off. I watched her descend the narrow stair, which she did without once looking back.

Then I returned to my chamber and closed the door. It seemed suddenly to have grown dark, and for the first time I noticed what a sorry light the candles gave.

Then remembering what was before me and that I needed sleep, I made haste to my bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING IN THE NINE ACRES.

I SLEPT well for all my adventures, and rose betimes in the morning. I dressed myself with much care, being resolved to leave the world, if need be, in a becoming fashion.

I had scarce breakfasted, when I heard a quick light step on the stair, and in a moment Mr. Tom Delahunt entered my room. He bowed low to me as I rose to greet him, then casting his hat and cane to the floor, he threw himself into a chair. He was magnificently dressed, and seemed, to judge from the elegance of his hair, to have but newly come from the friseur.

“I have not been careless of your interests, sir,” he began, with a smile which showed his very fine white teeth, “and I can happily inform you that the meeting has been arranged for to-morrow, an hour after sunrise, in the Nine Acres, if the time and place please you.

I bowed my assent.

“As for the delay, Mr. Power begs me to assure you of his principal’s regret for the delay, which was unavoidable, as he had an engagement of similar nature this morning,” he said, smiling pleasantly. “It may interest you to learn also,” he went on, still smiling, “that Bully Yelverton has shot his man prettily, and left a hole in his left lung.”

“Bully Yelverton!” I exclaimed, rising to my feet in my amazement, for he had named the straightest shot as well as the most skilful swordsman in the province of Leinster. God knows I had little enough chance against him on even terms, but to stand his fire without replying left me in such a case that Providence alone could save me, and Providence had seemed to be ever on the side of Bully Yelverton.

But less easily borne than the thought of death itself, was the knowledge that I had been so befooled. My brain burned when I remembered how proud I had been of my promise to spare the father for the daughter’s sake. I recalled how she had seemed confused when I had questioned her. It seemed a grim jest to gratify a woman’s whim. Why had she chosen me for the victim?

My surprise was such that I clean forgot the presence of my guest. As I turned from the window where I had been standing, I caught his glance. There was some contempt in his eyes, and this brought me to my senses.

When his gaze met mine, he rose from his seat and took up his hat and cane.

"Perhaps, sir," he said, coldly, "I mistook your name and your desire."

I turned on him furiously, for I could not mistake the meaning of his tone.

"If you doubt my courage, sir," I cried, "you can prove it here and now," and I pushed the case of pistols towards him.

His face flushed a little and, for a moment, he seemed as though he would accept my challenge. Then he laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Nay, nay," he said, "that were indeed to treat Bully Yelverton but scurvily, and as for your courage, why no man will dispute it, seeing that Tom Delahunt is your friend and Tony Dillon your kinsman, whose health I would gladly drink in a bottle of O'Keefe's best claret."

“I ask your pardon,” I said, flushing with shame at my remissness, “thinking of my poor life has made me forget that I am your host.”

“You have but little time left to make your character,” he answered, laughing pleasantly at his own wit, while I ordered a bottle of wine.

“True,” I said, “and I depend on you to do justice to my memory.”

“You may trust your life—your memory to me,” he replied, holding his glass to the light.

“You count me a dead man?” I asked. His indifference to my fate interested me strangely.

He emptied his glass and smacked his lips approvingly.

“As sure,” he answered, “as—as Tom Delahunt is bankrupt in all save honour, but,” as if the matter wearied him, “to the morrow belong the deeds of the morrow. You have blazed before?”

I bent my head with a smile.

“True, I need not have asked,” he said, “seeing that you are Galway born. About daybreak you shall see me again. Adieu!”

He took his hat and cane, and bowing low, left the room.

When my guest was gone, I sat down and wrote a long letter to my uncle, for I was loth to leave this world without a farewell to him who had loved me as a father his son. Until now, when I strove to put my gratitude in words, I had not thought how much I owed him. I wondered with what feeling he would learn of my death, and a lump rose in my throat. When I had set down fully the story of the quarrel and what had followed I was easier. At least he must approve my resolve to keep my pledge, however he might curse my folly to have given it.

The day went quickly, and I retired to rest early, my servant, Barney, watching through the night until it should be time to wake me. Before dawn I was ready, and as I waited I grew restless lest Delahunt should come late, or worse still, forget me altogether, and I was anxious to be on the ground first, but I need have felt no fear. It was not yet sunrise when I heard his coach halt before the door, and a few minutes later he was with me.

He scanned my face keenly, and I thought he seemed satisfied. He was very pale, and his eyes looked tired, so that I knew he had not slept.

I gave him the case of pistols, and he examined them with much care, seeming specially pleased with the notches carved in the stocks. Then he drew from the pocket of his cloak a flask of cognac, and pressed me to drink of it, but I shook my head, for I had no great liking for spirits at any time, and least of all in the morning.

"As you will," he said, raising the flask to his own lips, "and yet it has saved a man's life before now."

"I put small faith in it," I replied, as we went down the stair together.

The grey dawn was already creeping out of the east, and the soft September air blew gently in our faces. I took the letter from my pocket and gave it to my companion.

"If," I began—

"Have no fear," he replied, "It shall be delivered."

When we had come to the Nine Acres we left the coach and crossed on foot to the ground. The mist of the morning still hung like a shroud over trees and

grass. Mr. Delahunt surveyed the ground carefully, noting the trees in front of us and the position of the sun, and I knew that he was to be trusted in such a matter. Then he began to pace up and down impatiently, cursing Dick Power roundly for his tardiness and because, though I did not know this till afterwards, he had lost fifty guineas to him at the card table this same morning.

But our patience was not sorely tried. It was little past the hour of sunrise when a second coach drew up beside that which we had left, and from it issued my antagonist and his second.

I noticed that Bully Yelverton was attired much plainer than I had seen him before, being indeed clad in sombre garments. He made me a low bow, which I answered coldly, for truly I had no cause to show him more courtesy than good breeding required. But he did not seem to expect it, for when he had greeted me, he turned his back upon me and began to trol a song.

When the ground was chosen and measured at twelve paces, he took up his stand opposite me, and this he did with much assumption of indifference.

Midway between us a white kerchief, to which a cord had been attached, was laid as a signal when to fire. Then, having loaded and handed a pistol to each of us, our seconds withdrew each to the right of his principal and Mr. Power having the end of the cord.

On being answered that we were ready, suddenly he drew the kerchief away, and at the same instant I saw the blaze of my antagonist's pistol. I could scarce believe that I had not been struck, for I knew that he had covered me, but so it was. I was greatly amazed to find myself still unhurt, and for a moment I forgot that I still held the pistol undischarged in my hand. Then remembering, I raised my hand and fired in the air.

When the smoke had cleared away, I looked at Mr. Yelverton. The pistol had fallen from his hand and his face was blanched, as if with terror. As his second approached him, he called to him feebly—

“Dick, Dick, I am not well. Take me away.”

Mr. Power, who had seemed thunderstruck with amazement, was quickly at his side helping him to his coach.

When he had reached it and the door was thrown

open, he paused as if remembering, and made me a low bow, and this he seemed to me to do with much pain and difficulty.

As for me, I stood as if rooted to the spot in surprise at what had happened, as indeed I well might, seeing that Bully Yelverton had fought his last duel, but of that I had no knowledge until afterwards.

So leaving the Phoenix Park we sought our breakfast at the Nag's Head. Mr. Delahunt swore that he had never known anything which puzzled his comprehension so much as that Bully Yelverton had missed his man and that I had fired dumb, a thing which besides being against the Code was against all reason. A little later, Mr. Power joined us, seeming much disturbed, and made haste to tell us that Bully Yelverton had taken to his bed, and that the leech after much blood-letting had declared that he had got a stroke and was paralysed in his right side. And, indeed, it seemed as if Providence had befriended me, as Mr. Delahunt had said.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS EXCELLENCY.

WHEN I returned to my lodging I found lying there a message from my kinsman Donal bidding me come to the castle at the hour of four on the next day. So having leisure from affairs of business now that my meeting was ended so happily, I found abundant occupation in seeking a reason for the strange request which had been made to me on the night before. But none satisfied me, so that I was forced to relinquish a task so hopeless, and strive to put it from my mind—if I might, but I could not.

When I presented myself at the castle, which I did duly, my kinsman greeted me with no great warmth.

“ You have received my message? ” he asked.

I bowed.

“ It was written yesterday, in the morning, ” he went on, showing the while his fang-like white teeth.

“ His Excellency had then some thought of a commission for you. Since then he has——? ”

“What?” I exclaimed, for his manner boded me no good.

“Altered his intention,” my kinsman answered, regarding me coldly.

“May I know what has caused his Excellency to alter his intention?” I spoke as bravely as I could, but my heart was low the while.

“It is said,” he replied, in the same careless tone, “that on your arrival in the city, you went to a tavern and there, having drunk too deeply, doubtless because you were weary, you insulted and drew upon a stranger without cause.”

“Do you believe this story?” I asked, bitterly.

He shrugged his shoulders.

“It matters little what I believe,” he answered; “but his Excellency must needs be particular as to whom he grants his patronage. Evil tongues have not spared his Grace’s reputation.”

“Does his Excellency think then that I am unworthy of his service?” I asked, striving mightily to be calm.

My kinsman bowed.

“Are you too of the same mind as his Grace on this

matter?" I cried, hotly; and indeed it would not have pleased me ill to have made a quarrel with him there.

But my kinsman shrugged his shoulders as though the matter did not interest him. "It matters nothing," he answered, "what I think, seeing that I am but his Excellency's faithful servant." And this he spoke in a loud voice as though he wished all the world to know how faithful he was.

"I think that you are my enemy?" I said, looking into his eyes.

"Indeed," he answered; "you are a very young man, Theobald, and not a very wise one, in spite of your youth."

"A fool could tell a friend from an enemy," I cried, hotly.

"Then seek out a fool, cousin, with all haste," he answered.

"I have no need," I said, "seeing that I am a fool myself to have trusted you. And I tell you, Donal, that I do not believe you, for if his Excellency is the man they say he is, he will not punish me because I am a gentleman and have done as any gentleman would do in such an affair, however evil tongues may wag."

“Ho, ho,” exclaimed a musical voice behind me, “and what manner of man do they say his much-abused Excellency is, young sir?”

I turned round swiftly. The speaker was a tall, elegantly dressed man, not more than thirty years of age. He wore a diamond star on his breast, and an amused smile played about his handsome features. It was the Viceroy himself. I bowed low before him, confused and trembling at my own daring words. He repeated his question before I could find my tongue to answer.

“My kinsman Dillon is no courtier, your Grace,” Donal interposed, with a sneer.

“He is none the worse for that,” the Viceroy retorted, with so much meaning that my kinsman bit his lip for mortification. “But, young sir,” turning to me, “I await your answer. What do they say of his Excellency?”

“They say,” I answered, taking heart of grace, “that his Excellency’s sword was always more ready to defend a lady’s honour than his own life.”

“Ha, do they say so in truth?” he asked, seeming

nowise ill-pleased with my words. "And for what fair lady has your own good sword been drawn?"

I hesitated a moment, and then I told him that it was my cousin Lady Betty who had been spoken of with insult, but not that he had been named with her.

"The most beautiful and virtuous lady in Dublin," his Excellency cried out, hotly; "and you have done well, sir, to defend her honour. And as for that same commission, why look you here, if my Lady Betty will plead for you, it is yours," and with that he made me a bow and was gone ere I could thank him.

So it happened that what had gone so near to prove my ruin was now become the making of my fortunes. I made haste to present myself before my fair cousin, for although my uncle had forbidden it, I could now plead his Excellency's commands as my excuse.

My Lady Betty received me with much kindness. She was not so slender as I had remembered her when she would come to Carna in the winter, but indeed she was grown scarce less beautiful. When I had kissed her hand she turned her cheek to me very graciously to salute, and this gave me the greater hope that she would be my advocate. This she promised to do, with

a blush that became her mightily, so that I would have saluted her again, but she forbade it, yet without displeasure, and dismissed me, bidding me come again when I had learned his Excellency's decision.

And indeed I had no long time to wait, for on the third day a packet was delivered at my lodging. When I had broken the seal and opened it, I found that it was what I had hoped for; with it also was a letter written by my kinsman informing me that his Excellency had been pleased to appoint me an extra Aide-de-Camp to his person.

And so it came about that my meeting with Bully Yelverton, which was like to ruin my hopes, won me the friendship of his Grace of Rutland.

CHAPTER V.

MY UNCLE TONY.

For some days, my mind was so filled with the thought of my unexpected good fortune, that I found leisure for little else. I wrote a letter to my uncle Tony telling him of his Excellency's kindness to me, but of my meeting with Bully Yelverton I made no mention, seeing that I dared not tell him all that had happened lest I should make him angry, for I knew that he found it hard to forgive any one who disregarded the Code.

Indeed, I was not proud of my own share in the affair, albeit I owed to it his Excellency's favour. When I came to think of it, I wondered more and more how Bully Yelverton had missed, since his aim was sure at sixteen paces, and I had stood but twelve from the muzzle of his pistol. So I judged it better to tell my uncle nothing of the matter, albeit I was not without fear lest my cousin Donal should see in it

a chance to do me an ill-turn with him, since he had failed to prevent his Grace from giving me his commission.

Of my cousin, Lady Betty, I said little, save that she was accounted the most virtuous lady in Dublin, and could reckon on the sword of every honourable gentleman in the city if need were, to prove her worth. This I wrote, remembering that my uncle Tony had been wont to say that a lady's honour was as bright as the sword blades drawn in defence of it. So I made no mention of Lady Betty's beauty, but only of her virtue. And, in this, I think I did wisely, for my uncle made great haste to answer me, bidding me, if I found any one to question my cousin's virtue to call him out, and that if I did not kill him, he would ride to Dublin himself for that purpose, though his health was indifferent.

Then he fell to abusing his physician and the dropsy together, but chiefly the physician. "The rascal has insulted me, and the devil of it is I cannot shoot him because he is no gentleman, and there is not another physician within forty miles of me. Listen, Toby, and think how I bore it. Yesterday he

breathed a vein in my leg. When he had done, he said—

“ ‘ Sir, I have taken from you two gallons of water.’ ”

“ ‘ Water,’ said I. ‘ Wine, you mean; for I have not drank so much water in twenty years.’ ”

“ ‘ Water,’ said he again, whereat I flew into a great passion, telling him that he lied, for that I was no water drinker, and that he had reason to know that as well as I. After that I felt better, for a good burst of passion is worth much physic to a man whose heart and head only are alive, his other parts being in a sort dead.”

My uncle's letter made me glad, for I saw in it some hope that he would come to love my Lady Betty, as he had been used when she was a little girl. I could not forbear laughing to think of my uncle's quarrel with his physician, since I knew that the leech, though he might not be a gentleman, was yet as stiff-necked as any gentleman could be, and set great value by his own opinion, and had courage at the back of it. So he would not yield to any—not even to Tony Dillon—in argument, having more logic than wit, and he had no fear of an oath. If he had much skill I know

not, but certain I am that my uncle owed him many years of life; for, when the gout had crippled his limbs, the blood flowed so slowly that he was like to die of inaction had not choler against the leech filled his lungs and made his heart beat quick with passion.

I told my cousin, Lady Betty, what he had written of the leech, whereat she laughed, yet tenderly I thought, and then sighed, so that I was tempted to ask what had come between her and my uncle.

“My uncle Tony loves you,” I said.

But she turned her head away and would not answer me.

“He is generous if he is not always just,” I went on, hoping to find a chance of reconciling them.

“I have no fault to find either with his justice or with his generosity,” she answered, with some haughtiness.

“He is an old man,” I began.

“And you are a young man, and so you do not know when a subject is wearisome. I had liefer talk of some one other than Tony Dillon, even if it be Theobald Dillon.”

I bit my lip for mortification.

“ I have no desire to weary you with my poor self.”

“ Not even when I wish it? ”

“ You do not.”

“ By my honour I do. I hope the Viceroy will be good and faithful to his promise.”

“ I shall strive to merit his goodwill.”

“ Merit is but a dull thing, and his Grace loves nothing dull.”

“ How then shall I win his favour? ”

“ You must please his Grace. *Virtus laudatur, et alget*. Be as virtuous as you please, so you season your virtue with wit. You still smack somewhat of the country.”

“ ’Tis no wonder, seeing that I was born and bred there.”

“ The air of the court will soon blow it away. You have a good figure.”

“ Of that your ladyship is accounted a good judge,” I said, with a bow.

Her face flushed a little, so that I feared lest I had displeased her.

“ Then my judgment is of some worth? ”

“ Who doubts it? ”

“ You need not when it is favourable to you.”

“ His Excellency has a handsome figure himself,”
I said, watching her.

“ It were folly to doubt it,” she answered, and her face did not change, so that I wondered if she knew how tongues wagged of her and the Viceroy.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE VICEROY'S COURT.

ALREADY the town had ceased to talk much of my duel with Bully Yelverton, and albeit I could not forgive myself that I had fired dumb, yet I was no little consoled to know that others thought less of the sin of breaking the Code of Honour than I had been taught to regard it. But I was as far as ever from finding a reason why Bully Yelverton's daughter should have come secretly to my lodging to entreat me to fire dumb, pretending that she begged for the life of her father, and he the straightest shot in the kingdom. To think of it, and how I had been befooled by a pretty face and, I could not but confess it, a pretty wit, made me blush with shame and anger. And so, albeit the reason might have been plain enough to one less young, and perchance less vain, than I was, I was not destined to discover it for myself.

But, indeed, my mind was so filled with my new

honour and the thought of his Excellency's kindness to me, that I had leisure for little else.

The Vice-queen, too, was very gracious to me when the Duke presented me.

"I hope you will be my friend, Mr. Dillon," she said, giving me her hand.

To that I answered that it would be impossible for me to be other than her friend if I would be a man of honour, and seeing that all men loved her Grace either for her beauty or for her goodness. And then I feared that I had, maybe, displeased her by the boldness of my words, but she laughed out merrily.

"Indeed, Mr. Dillon," she said, "I thought that I was beloved by none in Ireland save by the weavers, who love me because I love their tabinets. And now since you have pledged yourself to be my friend, pray tell me if it is because of my poor beauty or because of my imagined goodness."

When she said this I knew not how to answer her, for I dared not tell her Grace that I loved her, and that I had scarce thought of her goodness. Then seeing that I was silent, she went on, smiling—

"My Lord Bishop of Derry respects me for my

good works, and the weavers love me. Are you like my Lord of Derry or like the weavers?"

"Which would your Excellency have?" I asked, seeing that she would have an answer.

"I think I would rather have the love of the weavers than the respect of the Bishop of Derry," she answered. "What of Mr. Dillon?"

"Mr. Dillon loves her Grace of Rutland for her beauty," I said, making her a low bow.

"And sets small store by her goodness," her Grace returned, in pretended displeasure.

"For that also he loves her," I replied.

"So that I am doubly beloved?" she asked, smiling.

I bowed.

On this she cried out that I was indeed a courtier; but for all that she was proud to have so gallant a knight as I to be her friend. Then she dismissed me very graciously, saying that I should often attend her when she went to take the air.

Nor was it long before I received her Grace's command to attend her, so I took my seat beside her in her new coach, which is now known as the Rutland

gig, for the Duchess herself had designed it. I think her Grace was even more proud of her coach than she was of her postillions, albeit she had prided herself much on them because they were the handsomest boys in the city, and was delighted to dress them gaily.

When we had reached the Circular Road, Sir Hercules Langrishe came up to her Grace's side. He was mounted on a very tall black horse, and I thought he did not seem over-pleased to see me where I was, for already I knew how it was said that he was no less devoted to the Duchess than was Colonel St. Leger.

Sir Hercules began by praising her Grace's postillions and their livery.

"Indeed, it pleases me well to think that they are not altogether unworthy of my ponies," she answered, a little coldly, for she was not too well pleased that Sir Hercules had forgotten to praise her coach.

"I know little of ponies," Sir Hercules replied, dropping his eyes to his horse's neck, "except Christian ponies."

"I know little of Christian ponies," her Grace answered, a little haughtily, "seeing that I do not

travel by chair, but my pagan ponies I love, for they do not protest and yet are faithful to me and keep their own counsel."

"Your Grace likes dumb service?" said Sir Hercules, as though he were perplexed.

"It is good," the Duchess answered; "albeit it is less ready than lip service."

Then she waved her hand and Sir Hercules fell back with a cloud on his brow.

I had little leisure for thinking on the matter, for the Circular Road was thronged from Park Gate to Summerhill with a most brilliant company. Her Grace's equipage, with its gold trappings, drew every eye as we passed, and the air was filled with murmurs of admiration. I glanced at the Duchess. Her eyes sparkled, and her face was all smiles again, so that I knew that she had forgotten, and maybe forgiven, Sir Hercules for his blindness.

The Countess of Antrim and Mrs. Beresford passed us, driving their ponies with much spirit, and then her Grace saluted in a very friendly fashion, for they had four, not six ponies, like the Duchess. After

them followed my Lords Howth and Sudley, driving each a single pair, but a great number of ladies took the air mounted, for the day was fine, and crowds of young bucks in brown powder followed them, making their horses prance and caracole in the sunshine.

A sudden movement caused me to turn and look at her Grace. Her face was grown crimson as with anger, and the smile gone from her lips. She carried her head very haughtily, and appeared no longer to notice those who saluted her.

Seeking to discover the cause of so sudden a change, I looked in the direction which her Grace's eyes had taken, and my surprise was so great that I could have cried out if I had not remembered in whose presence I was. There was no longer any need to wonder at the anger of the Duchess at an act so daring and so presumptuous. I saw approaching a coach drawn by six ponies. The coach was the exact counterpart of that of her Grace. The ponies and trappings were to a miracle the same, and neither could I discover any difference in the postillions.

Amazement had at first prevented my perceiving or, indeed, seeking to know the occupant of the coach. Suddenly her Grace turned to me.

“Who is the insolent baggage, sir?” she demanded, with the haughtiness of a queen.

I looked at the occupant of the coach. There was but one, and she was a woman, but I could not see her face.

This I was about to tell the Duchess, when the lady suddenly raised her head, and looked at her Excellency with no less haughtiness than she read in her eyes. Then for an instant her glance fell on my face, and she seemed to start, for she very quickly withdrew her eyes again.

“Who is the impudent baggage?” said her Grace again to me. But I could not answer; albeit I now knew full well that it was Miss Yelverton, the daughter of my enemy—she who had come to my lodging to beg of me to fire dumb when I met her father in the Nine Acres, and to whom I had promised this, and to be silent of the matter, not knowing then that she was fooling me.

But from these reflections I was roused by her

Grace, who again demanded very imperiously to know who was the impudent baggage that had so flouted her.

I scarce knew what to say, for I saw not how I could tell the Duchess of my meeting with this Miss Yelverton, seeing that I had pledged my word to be silent.

"Can you not answer, sir?" her Grace persisted, impatiently, "or has the jade bereft you of speech?"

"Your Grace forgets that I am new to the city," I answered.

"Ah, then you do not know," she said; "and so I must seek a wiser companion, and one more experienced in the ways of this insolent town, to attend me."

"I am your Grace's faithful servant," I replied, bowing humbly, "whether you use me or——"

"Abuse you," she broke in, laughing now. "But that were unjust; albeit it is a woman's way, and so we have few friends."

"Your Grace has many," I replied.

"Not one too many," she returned, "and I will keep you. And so, Mr. Dillon, I command you, by your fidelity to your Queen, for so I am, to discover

for me who this minx is that has dared to flout me. For look you here, there is a plot in this that may bode ill to my lord, and so we must discover it, you and I," and she smiled very sweetly.

Again I said that I was her servant.

"For the insolence of the jade I care nothing," she repeated; "but I think it is a matter of State."

Then she dismissed me.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS YELVERTON.

I WAS now in much perplexity, for I dared not disobey her Grace, neither did I know how I should do her bidding. While I thought on the matter I remembered my Lady Betty. My cousin would know how to advise me in this matter, and it was but right that I should delay no longer.

So having taken this resolve, I made haste to carry it out. When I reached my cousin's house, I did not wait to be announced, but went quickly to my Lady Betty's drawing-room, making no doubt that I should find her there. I had scarce passed the threshold when I paused in some incertitude, for at the end of the room a lady was standing close by the window. Her form was very slender, so that, albeit I could not see her face, I knew that she was not my cousin.

I hesitated, not knowing whether I should withdraw or await my cousin, when the lady turned her head. I drew back in amazement, for my eyes told

me that it was Miss Yelverton who stood before me, and I could scarce credit them, since in my cousin's drawing-room I had least hope to find her. Seeing that she was looking at me, I said with a low bow, "I ask your pardon, but I did not think to find any one here save my cousin."

She smiled.

"I think, sir," she said, making me a little courtesy, "that we have met before."

"It may be so, madam," I answered, coldly, remembering, for all her beauty, my promise to her to keep the matter secret, and how she had befooled me, "but in truth I had forgotten it."

She seemed perplexed a moment, then her lips parted and she laughed merrily. "I thank you, sir," she said, "that you have been faithful to your pledge, and for that I absolve you from your promise—for the moment."

"I have fulfilled my promise," I replied, somewhat haughtily.

"Ah! I meant not that, and yet for that also I thank you," she went on. "Have you forgiven me?"

But I did not trust myself to answer for the tumult that rose in my heart.

“And yet,” she said, I thought a little sadly, though that, too, might well be only make-believe, “I may deserve some thanks, seeing that I have saved your life.”

“To my own disgrace,” I answered, bitterly.

“Nay, not so,” she broke out with some impatience. “To have stood the fire of one who has never missed before is no disgrace.”

“A child might face an empty pistol without fear,” I said.

“You did not know it to be so,” she answered, and then added a little sorrowfully, “my father has fought his last duel.”

“I am much concerned to learn that Mr. Yelverton is indisposed,” I said again, but this time more gently, for try as I might I felt the anger leaving me.

She bent her head.

“Have you forgiven me, sir?” she asked, very humbly.

“I cannot tell,” I answered, looking at her.

"And yet you are a brave man," she said.

The word stung me.

"I thank you for saying it," I replied, making her a bow, "for indeed I need the assurance."

She stamped with her foot upon the floor impatiently.

"I meant not that," she exclaimed, "but I think it no dishonour for so brave a man."

"To suffer a woman to befool him?" I said.

"To forgive a woman for the folly of her heart," she went on, turning her head from me, and with her eyes downcast.

I stood looking at her in silence, for I lacked resolution to answer.

"Lady Betty is from home, sir," she said, at last raising her eyes.

"Then you would have me go?" I asked. And, in truth, it grew more difficult to leave her.

"Since it is no easy matter to entertain an enemy," she returned, smiling a little.

"But I am your friend," I said.

"I could not have guessed it," she answered me.

"There is no need," I cried.

"Since you are angry with me," she broke in.

"No longer," I said.

"And so, sir, you have forgiven me?" she asked, turning her eyes upon me again.

For answer, I caught her hand to my lips, for I could resist no longer.

"In these days a friend is better than an enemy," she said, calmly, though there was more colour in her cheek than I had seen before.

"In these or in any days," I answered, and the words reminded me of her Grace, and what she had commanded.

"Indeed, it is true," she said, "seeing how hard it is to find a friend."

"The Duchess of Rutland would fain know who her rival is," I replied, as carelessly as I could.

"Would she so?" she asked, laughing, and there was some scorn in her voice.

"Indeed she would," I answered.

"Then you may tell her," she said.

"What?"

She lifted her head before she answered, and her words were a challenge.

“Tell her,” she exclaimed, “that I love Ireland, and am the friend of Lord Galtymore.”

“So I will tell her Grace,” I answered, “if she ask me.”

“And if she do not, then be silent,” she said, thoughtfully, “for it may be better.”

So I bowed and left her, for I dared not stay longer, seeing that business awaited me, and that of much importance. I was now in no small perplexity, for I knew not how I should deliver to her Grace the message which Miss Yelverton had entrusted to me. But when several days passed, and still the Duchess did not speak of the matter, I began to think that she had clean forgotten it. And this was natural enough, seeing how little leisure she had, with balls on Tuesday nights and drawing-rooms on every Friday, for this was his Excellency's wish. And so it did not surprise me that she had forgotten both me and the promise I had made her, albeit I could have borne it more easily if her Grace had dismissed me from her favour in anger, and not because she did not any longer remember me.

So I resolved that since women had treated me so

scurvily I would think no more on them, but rather apply myself to the business which befitted my station—to wit, that of serving his Excellency, my master.

I had scarce come to this resolve when a message was brought me from her Grace, commanding me to attend her while she took the air; so I made haste to wait upon her, no longer remembering my resolve.

“You have been very diligent in business, sir,” she said to me, smiling while I kissed her hand.

“I serve my master, madam,” I answered.

“And forget your mistress,” she returned, looking closely at me.

“’Tis not for a servant to forget,” I said, meeting her eyes.

“What then, sir?” she asked, turning her head from me.

“To be forgotten, madam,” I replied, gravely.

“Nay,” she cried, “not if he is a true and faithful servant.”

“I have been both,” I answered her.

“And so you are remembered,” she said, laying her hand upon my arm. “Is that reward enough, or do you seek for more?”

"I desire no more," I returned.

"And so you are happy," she said, smiling into my eyes.

"When your Grace remembers me," I answered, leading her to her coach.

I perceived with some surprise that the coach which awaited her Grace was not that in which I had ridden with her before, and of which she had seemed so proud, but one of the State coaches. This struck me as being strange, the more so as I had heard her Excellency say that she hated State coaches, since they reminded her of funeral cars.

"The gig is more comfortable, I think," she remarked, as though she knew what was in my mind.

"It could hardly fail to be, seeing that your Grace designed it," I answered.

"Thinking on that and on the shortness of life, as my Lord of Derry recommended last Sunday, I have resolved to mortify myself."

"You, madam?" I asked.

"Yes, even I, since there is need of a practical application of the Bishop's advice," she answered, with great solemnity. "And so I have bestowed my

gig upon the hospital of good Dr. Mosse for the poor women there."

"And they will take the air in your Excellency's gig?" I asked, for the strangeness of the thing amazed me.

"So I have desired," she answered. "And see, so it is."

I lifted my head and saw, indeed, the gig pass us. In it were two women, one in the garb of a nurse, the other looking pale and sick in the sunshine.

Then I turned to the Duchess.

"'Tis no wonder that the people love your Grace since your goodness is no less than your beauty," I said.

But the Duchess bent her head and did not answer me. Then after a moment she bade me order the coach to turn back, and this I did. Her face was grown very gentle, and there was no longer any pride in her eyes.

I looked out before me and saw that the gig was but a little ahead of us, nor would it have been easy to pass it for the throng that was about us. Her Grace was very thoughtful, and seemed not to see those who passed.

Suddenly I saw six ponies with gay trappings come towards us.

In an instant they were level with the gig before us in which the two women were sitting. Then went by us such another gig, and in it sat Miss Yelverton.

She held her head very high, but her face was pale with anger, and she looked neither to the right nor to the left, but straight before her.

When she had passed, I turned to look at the Duchess. Her eyes were still downcast, but there was a soft colour on her cheek, and this spoke her triumph, albeit her lips were silent. When she had remained silent for some days and spoke no more upon the matter, I grew to think that she had clean forgot Miss Yelverton and that she had dared to rival her. But indeed it was not so, as I was soon to learn.

By the order of his Excellency the Viceroy, balls were given at the Castle on Tuesday nights, while the drawing-rooms were held on Friday nights during the Court season, for it was my lord's desire to excel the Earl of Buckingham in the splendour of his hospitality, even if he could not win the hearts of the people, as Lord Townshend had gone near to do.

And in this the Viceroy had her Grace to back him, for sure there never was a Vice-queen so untiring, whether in the dance or in seeking to win the love of those who hated my Lord Duke.

And so it came about that scarce a night passed that the Castle was not thronged with guests, and albeit many of them, too, hated my lord and could speak no good thing of him, yet I think even they also were not a little proud to think that no capital in Europe could boast so much wit, beauty, and magnificence as the Duke of Rutland had gathered about him at the Castle of Dublin. Nay, it was even whispered that his Majesty himself was but little pleased to hear of the doings of my lord, and had complained to Mr. Pitt that his Viceroy had learned to play the King so well that he knew not how he should ever endure to be a subject again. To this Mr. Pitt had answered that the magnificence of the Viceroy but increased the majesty of the King, and that since the Irish loved such magnificence it would make them more loyal to the King's majesty, seeing that the Viceroy was but the servant of the King, even as the meanest subject was.

CHAPTER VIII.

HER GRACE'S REVENGE.

It was Friday, a se'nnight after that I had attended her Grace in the State coach, when a message was brought me bidding me wait upon the Duchess. So, thinking that she wished to speak with me upon some matter relating to the Drawing-Room, for it was her wont often to inquire of me concerning her guests, if they were unknown to her—asking if this one was brave, or another reputed handsome, and such like questions—I obeyed and waited upon her Grace.

When the Duchess perceived me, she very quickly dismissed Mr. Hasler, the Court Chamberlain, for he had come to present to her Grace the names of those ladies who desired to dance minuets at the next ball.

“Mr. Dillon,” she said, when we were alone, “it grieves me to think that I have many enemies.”

“You, madam!” I exclaimed. “Surely there is none in the kingdom so greatly beloved.”

“And yet,” she answered, smiling very sweetly, “there are some that hate me.”

At this I was silent, for I could not deny that it was true.

“What do you think of the Bishop of Derry?” she asked, after that she had waited for me to speak.

“He is a good preacher,” I said.

“That I think myself,” she replied. “But what of his conscience?”

“Madam,” I exclaimed, smiling, “his lordship has not confessed to me, so I know not for certain!”

“If my lord has a conscience,” she broke in, laughing. “But it may be that the Earl of Bristol is keeper of the Bishop of Derry’s conscience.”

“How may that be, madam?” I asked, for her words puzzled me; “seeing that the Earl of Bristol and the Bishop of Derry are the same person.”

“I know not,” she answered. “But of this I am certain, that if the Bishop is a saint, the Earl is a sinner, for the Bishop bids us forgive our enemies, and the Earl labours to destroy his. Whom shall I follow?”

“Surely, the Bishop, madam,” I answered; “seeing

that he speaks with authority when he bids us forgive."

"So be it then," her Grace said, smiling, "for to-night I will forgive one of my enemies, and that, too, before the people."

I remained silent, for I could not think what was in her Grace's mind, or if she jested. Then I asked if her Excellency had any commands for me.

"Yes, Mr. Dillon," she replied. "When the presentations are being made to-night, be sure you stand near to me, a little behind the throne. Then you shall see what you shall see, and bear me witness."

So I promised that I would, and left her.

Thus it was that on that same night, while the presentations were being made, I stood, as her Grace had commanded me, a little behind her throne, and on the left of it. I had never seen the Duchess looking more beautiful nor so gracious, for I could discover no pride in her face. And that others noted this too I know, for General Cradock, who stood near to me, whispered in my ear—

"Her Grace has forgot that she is a Beaufort."

"What matter is it," I returned, "so she remember

that she is a Rutland, for among the Irish pride makes no friends, but a multitude of enemies?"

So I turned from him and watched her Grace. She was dressed in white tabinet embroidered in silver, and, albeit she loved jewels as much as any woman, yet she wore none save only a star of diamonds upon her hair. His Grace stood beside her, looking very handsome in a suit of purple velvet, and they two made as pretty a sight as ever I saw.

The throng about the throne was now grown so dense that I had no little difficulty to keep my place and to see all those who came forward.

"As fair a face as ever I saw, by my faith," General Cradock exclaimed, so loudly that I feared lest the Duchess should hear. Then in a lower tone he whispered—

"Her Grace has found a rival at last."

"Indeed," I said, smiling. "My Lady Charlemont is fair, and if she had youth to back her——"

"Who spoke of my Lady Charlemont?" he interrupted, impatiently. "I speak of her *protégée*. See here," and he drew me aside so that I could see over the shoulders of those who stood before me. The

Countess of Charlemont was approaching the throne and leading by the hand a young girl—at least so much I judged from her form, for I could not see her face clearly because her head was bent, and a great hat, with many feather, hid it. But when they were come within a few paces of their Excellencies, she raised her head as if to challenge those who gazed at her.

“Miss Yelverton!” I cried out, forgetting in my amazement where I was, or that her Grace might hear me, as indeed she did, for she turned a little toward me, and the smile on her face grew deeper. Then I saw that Miss Yelverton was kneeling before the Duke. In an instant his Grace raised her up, and, having kissed her so heartily upon the cheek that the blood quickly crimsoned it, he presented her to the Duchess. Miss Yelverton seemed to hesitate a moment, for I saw my Lady Charlemont make a gesture to her to tell her what she must do. Then she knelt before the Duchess. For a moment her Grace regarded the bent head before her, smiling, then she raised Miss Yelverton up, very graciously, and looked into her face.

“My dear,” she said, still holding her hands and speaking so that all might hear, and yet very gently, “they flattered me when they told me that I was beautiful, but surely mine and all other beauty must pall before such beauty as yours. Is it not so, gentlemen?” and she turned towards those that stood before me. “Ah, yes! I see that it is, so in token of my abdication, you will wear this for me.”

Her grace took from her hair the diamond star which was her only ornament, and set it upon the head of Miss Yelverton. For a moment she seemed like one in a dream and not knowing what to answer. Then, without a word, she covered her face with her hands and burst out sobbing.

But her Grace took her into her arms, as though she were a child, and kissing her on both cheeks, forbade her to weep. But at this she wept all the more, and so continued to weep while Lady Charlemont led her through the crowd and out of our sight.

When I turned towards the throne again I saw his Excellency raise her Grace's hand to his lips, and I thought she appeared very happy. Then seeing that

I was near, for the crowd had drawn back, her Grace motioned to me to approach her.

“You will bear me witness——” she said, softly, when I was come to her.

“I will bear your Grace witness,” I answered.

“That I have made a friend of an enemy,” she went on.

“That your Grace has made a friend,” I returned.

At this she laughed.

“So be it then,” her Grace said again. “But look you here, Mr. Dillon, so much beauty needs a protector.”

“Yes, madam,” I replied, wondering what was in her mind.

“And so, seeing that I am her friend, I must needs concern myself that she find one suitable to her rank and beauty,” her Grace continued, watching me so closely that I felt the blood warm in my face. “Do you know of any one who is worthy of her?”

“I cannot tell, madam,” I stammered.

“Then go, sir,” she returned, laughing; “and if you think of such a one, I charge you by your fealty

to let me know who it is." And waving her hand she dismissed me.

Neither did her Grace's triumph end in this that she had made Miss Yelverton her friend, for of all the things which the Duchess of Rutland did, none I think won her so much love from the people as her gift to the hospital.

But the coachmakers grumbled against her because she would have no more coaches made in Dublin.

CHAPTER IX.

MY LADY BETTY.

HER Grace's words kept ringing in my ears, for I could no longer mistake her meaning.

"So much beauty needs a protector," she had said. "That she shall never lack while I live," I cried out, and giving rein to the fancy I drew my sword, making it flash in the sunlight. Suddenly a shadow fell on me and a harsh laugh grated on my ears. It was my cousin Donal.

"Ha, ha," he laughed, "'tis a brave amusement."

My face burned with anger, for of all whom I had ever known I came nearest to hating Donal.

"I do not understand," I said, coldly.

"A faint heart might well grow brave when it has but shadows to fight against."

"I fear you less than I do a shadow, and if you would prove it, draw your idle blade."

"And face a Court scandal and the Duke's anger, to speak nothing of the sin of killing a kinsman. No,

no, sweet cousin; but instead, pray tell me who is the fair lady that has so disturbed your reason that you gesticulate like a French fencing-master."

Anger choked me so that I could not answer him.

"Lady Betty's ball will miss its fairest ornament," he went on.

"How so?" I asked, curtly.

"They say that Miss Yelverton has left the city, and will not return for many weeks."

"Doubtless she pleases herself in what she does."

"And displeases my brave cousin, is it not so?" and he showed his fang-like teeth.

"If she gives her confidence to you."

"Since you are her protector," and he laughed again.

"An excuse for killing a kinsman."

"Because the lady rejects you and chooses one less valiant in speech."

"What, a sleek knave!" I cried.

"Hating a tavern brawler."

I took a step forward, but with a bow of mock humility he left me.

My Lady Betty's ball was as brilliant as ever I saw,

albeit his Grace of Rutland did not honour it with his presence. The absence of the Viceroy was not likely to pass unnoticed by such lovers of scandal as thronged my cousin's ball-room. Here and there I saw groups talking together with significant smiles and meaning gestures: If I approached them they grew instantly silent, or spoke in loud voices of things too innocent and harmless to give them pleasure, so that I was convinced that this sudden charity was due to my presence.

Once I heard a voice say that my Lord Duke was but fickle as a lover, and that the Lady Betty's reign was over. It was a woman who spoke, and a young and comely one to boot; and to this another less young and less comely made answer that doubtless his Grace preferred the boudoir to the ball-room, and had no need to make public profession of his love, seeing that it was well known to every one in Dublin, from the Court Chamberlain to the meanest shoeblack. Then both of them laughed very pleasantly. I felt my cheek flush with anger, and my hand in an instant sought the hilt of my sword; then I laughed almost aloud, remembering that they were women of fashion

and were but sharpening their wits as they were used, at the expense of my cousin's reputation.

Somewhat impatiently I pushed my way through the crowd, for I was but new to the ways of the Court and had not yet learned to smile when I was angry, and presented myself before Lady Betty. She received me most graciously, giving me her hand to kiss, while those about her drew back a little. Then I lifted my head and looked into her eyes.

I had never seen my cousin looking more beautiful, and if she missed his Excellency's presence, as no doubt she did, I could read in her countenance neither anger nor disappointment.

She wore a light pink silk gown, with a diamond stomacher and sleeve-knots. On her head was a large brown hat trimmed with red ribbon and decorated with a great quantity of jewels. There were many ladies in the room more richly dressed, but none whose robes became her as did my Lady Betty's. I suppose she read in my eyes the wonder I felt at her beauty, and was pleased at it, seeing that I was little more than a lad and country bred, and yet untrained to lie with eyes or voice. She laughed merrily, and in spite

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of the paint and the patches, I could have sworn that her cheek flushed a deeper crimson.

“Why, cousin,” she cried, “did I not know that it is not so, I should think that you had come from a convent of monks vowed to silence, and not from the merriest and wickedest Court in Europe.”

“It’s little I know of monks,” I answered, “unless it be they of the Screw, and of them your ladyship must needs know more than I, seeing that you are the patron saint.”

“How should I know,” she said, laughing, “seeing that the monks are but sad sinners in a holy garb, and not over fond of prayer or confession.”

“They have made at least one confession,” I said. “And they swear that they have received no absolution.”

“They are more deserving of penance than of absolution, methinks,” she retorted. “But what news of the Court, which, it seems, has banished us from its august presence? What do they say at the Court?”

I looked at her quickly, seeking to know if there was any hidden bitterness in her words; but her countenance was calm and smiling.

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“No new thing,” I answered, “but that my Lady Betty is the fairest lady in Ireland.” And I made her a low bow.

“Ah! Do they say so still?” she asked, but not as if she desired an answer. Then she lifted her head proudly. “But I care not what they say,” she went on, “and so, sweet cousin, you can tell them.”

Then she motioned me, a little haughtily, to leave her, as though she were angry with me because she had spoken to me thus. So I bowed to her again, and drew back among the crowd not a little perplexed at the change in my cousin’s manner.

I had not intended to remain long at the ball, and, indeed, had only presented myself because it was my duty, and seeing how much I owed to my Lady Betty.

Moreover, there was a certain matter which lay heavy upon my mind. That same evening I had witnessed a sad quarrel over the cards between my friend Phil Blake and his kinsman, Roger Delaney, and they were to meet an hour after sunset on the morrow. Now I had small liking for affairs between near kinsmen, and yet I could not refuse Blake to be his second. Blake, too, had a quick temper, especially after wine,

and he had but small skill with the firearms, although with the rapier none was more cunning of fence than he, unless after a drinking bout, when his eye was dim, for a child could beat him at the bottle.

And this, too, was the cause of the trouble, for Roger Delaney allowed no wine, however much he drank, to heat his blood, but ever kept watch to find his neighbour tripping, whether he was friend or foe, and scarce ever missed his man except when the air was thick and a mist lay on the grass, for he had short sight.

So when the quarrel arose, Phil Blake cared nothing for the rules of the meeting and gave his opponent what he wished, declaring that he had no love of his life while Roger Delaney lived to make him ashamed that he was a man. All this Delaney bore with a smile, and showed no anger. Then an attorney was sent for, and a bond was drawn up declaring that whichever of the two stood upon the ground in the Nine Acres when the bell tolled in the belfry of St. Michan's, which it would at one hour and a half past sunrise, should take the property of the other forever, whether he lived or died.

So Peter O'Flaherty and I put our names to the paper, after the two principals had signed it. Then leaving them to finish their wine, I came away to pay my duty to my cousin.

I had little pleasure in the meeting, for there was small doubt in my mind which way the duel would turn out.

Seeing how my cousin had dismissed me, the ball was no longer to my liking, and I was about to leave the room, pressing my way through the throng, when I felt my hand seized and something thrust into it. I looked round suddenly, hoping to discover who the messenger was, but I could see no one to whom this character certainly belonged. I withdrew myself as quickly as I could from the crowd, and unfolding the note, which was much crumpled, I strove to read it. Nor was it easy at first, for it was written with pencil and indistinctly as if in haste. It was from my cousin, who bade me hasten at once to her boudoir by the private way that I knew. It was signed "Betty."

I was no little surprised at this message, but without wasting time in conjecture I sought the private stair which led to my cousin's apartments. It was

as well known to me as it was said to be to his Grace, and this thought struck me while I clambered up the stair. Then I pushed the door open and entered my Lady Betty's boudoir. A silver bell tinkled as I put the curtains aside, and upon the threshold my cousin awaited me. The light from a lofty candelabrum fell upon her head and arms, and threw into deeper shadow the white of her agitated bosom. Her brows were knit together, and the laughter was gone from her lips, which were closed as if in stern resolve.

I saw that she was in no mood for gallantry, yet I took her hand and raised it to my lips as I had been used, and she suffered it, albeit with impatience. Then she seized me by the arm, and drawing me into the room, pointed to a couch which was half concealed in the shadow. I bent forward, for the light was in my eyes and dazzled them, and saw a figure stretched upon the couch, with a riding cloak thrown upon it.

I turned to my cousin in amazement and with no small fear at my heart as to what it could mean. Without looking at me she drew the cloak down and discovered the face of a man.

“My God!” I cried out, “it is Phil Blake.”

“Hush,” she whispered, raising her finger in warning, and the jewels flashed upon her arm.

“He is——?” I began, and feared to speak what was in my mind.

“As you see,” she answered, wearily.

“Not dead?” I said.

“Nay, not dead, only sleeping,” she replied, and there was scorn in her voice.

“How did he come hither?” I asked. But at this she turned her head away and did not answer me. But I needed no answer, for I understood.

I knelt by the couch, and put my ear to the sleeper’s breast; his breath came quickly and he muttered in his sleep. His neck was bare at the throat and the veins in it swollen. Every now and again his limbs quivered, but still he slept soundly.

I rose to my feet again, perplexed and my mind filled with doubt, and looked at my cousin. Her eyes were fastened upon the door by which I had entered, and she appeared to listen. Then she turned and motioned me to retire from the couch to a corner of the room. Again the silver bell tinkled and the

curtain was thrown back and a man entered. A deep sigh broke from my cousin's lips, and I heard her murmur, "At last."

From the shelter of a screen I watched. The man was small and old, and carried a gold-headed cane. He bowed low before Lady Betty, and without a word went to the couch. From his manner I judged that he was a physician. Then I heard them whisper together.

"Four hours," said my Lady Betty.

"Nay, madam," he answered, "nor eight, nor it may be twelve."

"Then death were better," she exclaimed, bitterly. "He has been——" I could not hear the last word, but the physician answered—

"Indeed I fear that your ladyship is right."

"Never a word of this," my cousin said.

"My lips are sealed," he answered, bowing and passing backwards beneath the curtain.

Then my Lady Betty came to me.

"Cousin Theobald," she said, looking at me sadly, "my honour is in your hands."

"It is safe," I replied, catching her hand and kissing it, for my heart was heavy for her trouble.

"Promise me," she went on, "that you will do as I ask you, whatever it be, for twelve hours to come."

"Forever if you will," I burst out.

"Nay, I am no tyrant," she said, smiling. "If he does not meet Roger Delaney in four hours' time," looking at her tiny jewelled watch, "he forfeits his property and everything he has, even his honour."

"It is true, that he will," I returned.

"You know all," she went on. "We—you and I—must save him, for you are his friend, and as for me—why, God help me, I love him to distraction."

She bent her head so that I could not see her eyes, but the jewels quivered, trembling upon her neck.

"We will save him," I answered her, albeit I knew not how we should. At this she bent forward and touched my cheek lightly with her lips. Then she drew herself up, shaking her shoulders as though she were casting a woman's weakness from her.

"That we shall, cousin Theobald," she said, "unless you fail me, which you will not."

She went back to the sleeping form and I followed her.

“He must not remain here,” she went on. “Can you carry him?”

I answered that I could, and desired to know whither she would have him taken. She pointed to a door leading to another chamber. So I took him in my arms without difficulty, for I was young and strong, and carried him. My Lady Betty held back the curtain to let me pass. When I had laid him upon the bed I returned and asked her what next she would have me do. At first she seemed confused, and could not find words to answer me; but at length I understood that she desired to have the clothes that he wore. At this I could scarce conceal my surprise, but she grew impatient, complaining of my lack of wit. So I returned to the bedchamber, and having undressed Phil Blake, who still showed no sign of waking, I carried his breeches and stockings, together with his laced coat, to my Lady Betty and threw them upon the couch.

She did not look at them, but turned her back as if she feared the sight of them.

“ I think there is little difference in our height,” she said.

A light broke suddenly upon my mind.

“ Cousin Betty,” I exclaimed, “ what will you do? ”

“ Kill Roger Delaney,” she replied, with her eyes flashing.

“ It is impossible,” I began.

“ How so, Master Slow-Wit? ” she asked, calmly, though I saw that her anger was rising.

“ Because,” I answered, “ Roger Delaney will not fire at a woman.”

“ He shall not know that I am a woman,” she said, “ not when I wear—these,” and she made a gesture towards the couch upon which I had thrown the clothes.

“ There is little difference in our stature,” she went on, and in this she spoke truly, since for a woman she was uncommon tall. “ And if the morning is dark, as it is apt to be, it would need sharper eyes than Roger Delaney’s to note the difference. Neither are our features very different—at least, in the morning.” And she put her finger on the patch that was on her cheek.

"Lady Betty," I said, remembering that Roger Delaney was not wont to miss when he was minded to kill, "let me take his place. At least, I shall save his life."

"But not his fortune, nor, what is dearer, his honour," she said. "But you waste words, since you have given me your promise. I must return for a while, or they will wonder at my long absence."

"Will not those garments betray you?" I asked, in despair, seeing that she was not to be moved.

"A woman's wit shall make them fit," she replied, laughing, "unless you fail me."

"What shall I do?" I asked.

"Cousin Theobald," she answered, "go with all speed, seek the skilfulest breeches-maker in Dublin and bring him thither."

"But it is long past midnight," I said; "and if I find one such, how shall I compel him to come?"

She looked at me with flashing eyes, so that my face grew hot beneath her scorn.

"You are a man," she cried, "and yet you ask a woman such a question!"

I hung my head in bewilderment, for I had no

answer ready. Then she turned rapidly from me with a gesture, half of contempt, half of impatience, and went to the table upon which her jewels lay sparkling in a careless heap. From amongst them she snatched up something which I could not see. Then she seized my right hand and put in it something cold and smooth. I looked down and saw that it was a small pistol, delicately wrought in silver and ivory. I lifted my head and saw that she was watching me anxiously.

“I will bring him hither,” I said.

“Without delay?” she asked.

“Without delay,” I answered.

A sigh broke from her lips and the smile returned to her face.

“Cousin Theobald,” she said, “your wits are slow, but if they are sure, what matters it?” Then she made me a courtesy and lifted the curtain and passed out, leaving me alone with the pistol in my hand.

CHAPTER X.

PHIL BLAKE.

FOR a few moments I stood where she had left me, for, in truth, I had need to recover my scattered wits. Then I went softly to the table, and laid the pistol upon it among the jewels. Nor could I forbear to smile, thinking in what manner the breeches-maker would regard such an earnest of his fee.

So I went down the stair very gently and out into the street. The night was quiet, but from the windows of many houses in Stephen's Green came the blaze of light and the sound of music, for it was the season of revelry, and my Lady Betty's ball-room was not the only one in the city thronged with guests.

When I came to the College, I paused in much perplexity, not knowing where to find a breeches-maker to do my cousin's bidding. Then suddenly I bethought me of one, whose sign I remembered hard by in Trinity Street, and with rapid steps I strode thither. I could find no knocker, so I beat the door

with the hilt of my sword. When I had waited a little, a window was opened above me, and a head wearing a white cap was thrust from it. A voice, in which sleep and dissatisfaction were blended, demanded to know who it was that disturbed a peaceful citizen in the midst of his slumber.

To that I answered that if he would come down and open the door I would tell him of a matter which promised to be of much profit to him if he would make haste. He seemed to hesitate, then without a word he shut the window again. I now began to fear that I should see no more of him, nor did I dare to belabour the door lest I should attract the notice of the watch.

But my fear was groundless, for in a short while I heard the creaking of the bolts and the rattle of a chain. Then the door was cautiously opened, and a little man holding a lantern looked out at me and again demanded my business. I made answer that if he would admit me I would tell him, adding that by so doing he would be serving his own interests. At this he made way for me to enter, which I did.

He was as ugly a man as ever I saw, and I thought

he appeared avaricious. I told him what he was required to do, whereat he smiled very cunningly and said that I had come to the right man for my purpose, as many could testify. I answered that I needed no testimony, but that his silence concerning the affair was as necessary as his skill, and that if ever he breathed a word of it, it would be at the peril of his life, and I tapped the hilt of my sword to give him warning.

He assured me that he carried many such secrets, and that he would rather die than divulge any of them. Then having put into a bag certain instruments of his calling he declared that he was ready, and followed me from the house, carefully shutting the door. So I returned to my cousin's house, the breeches-maker creeping noiselessly behind me as if he were a shadow.

At the top of the stair my Lady Betty awaited us. She motioned my companion to enter the room while she spoke with me. When the fellow had gone in, she begged me to return to the ball-room, and show myself to as many as possible until she went back to it again, which she would do in a little time. When I

had promised to do this, she told me that at sunrise I should wait near to the house of his Grace of Leinster, and that when a coach passed by with a white kerchief hanging from the window, I was to enter it.

This also I promised to do, and then I went back to the ball-room. I soon perceived that my cousin's absence had not passed unnoticed, and that many persons smiled and whispered together as I passed. But I was too much occupied with my own thoughts to heed them overmuch, or to show anger because of their evil tongues. Indeed, remembering what my Lady Betty had told me, I was careful that my greeting should be frequent, and not lacking in courtesy. While I spoke with one of them, who, with much assumed indignation, complained of the Viceroy's absence, a sudden silence fell upon those about me, which was instantly followed by the low murmur of voices. I looked round seeking an explanation, and saw my cousin passing through her guests. She had a word and a smile for every one, and as they bowed before her she looked like a queen, and they the loyal-est subjects a queen ever had.

Never had I seen her looking so beautiful and so

proud. As she passed me her eyes flashed for a moment into mine. In them I read triumph and the assurance of the success of her scheme. Then my Lady Betty took leave of her guests.

As soon as she was gone, I too departed, and going to my chamber I examined carefully the pistols, Spit-fire and Flash, which my uncle had given me. I could not have wished my cousin better or more lucky firearms, albeit they seemed a trifle heavy for a lady's hand. I put them carefully into my belt and sallied forth again to seek the trysting-place. On my way thither I saw the Viceroy's escort waiting in the street, the horses impatiently pawing the ground, while their riders sat with bent heads as if they were fallen asleep.

I could not forbear to smile to think that his careless Grace had forgotten them, leaving them there, as he had done so often before my Lady Betty's door.

The night was dark and cloudy, and rain fell at times, but not much. At this I was glad, for it promised a gloomy morning, and so far the luck was on my cousin's side.

When I reached the appointed place I withdrew

into the shadow of a wall and waited. The dawn was beginning to show faintly, and the sky was turning from black to grey.

Now that I had leisure to think I felt my heart almost fail me, and I repented bitterly of my share in the matter, albeit I knew that I had no power to refuse my cousin anything, and would do the same again, even were my pledge given back to me.

I was roused from these gloomy thoughts by the sound of wheels, and in a few moments a coach came slowly towards the place where I stood. Even without the patch of white hung from the window I knew that it was the coach for which I waited. As I stepped into the street it halted. So I opened the door and sprang quickly into it, taking my seat beside the other occupant.

I could scarce keep back the cry of amazement, which sprang to my lips when I gazed at my companion. Did I not know that it was impossible, no man's oath would have convinced me that this was any one else but Phil Blake. My cousin had said that her features were not unlike those of Blake, but even this had not prepared me for the startling resemblance

which I saw now that my Lady Betty was dressed as a man, and in Phil Blake's clothes. Only her eyes were brighter than his, as was but natural, seeing that they owed no dulness to the wine-cup.

In my amazement I said nothing, and my cousin laughed softly as if she were pleased at my surprise.

"Do I make a pretty fellow?" she asked.

"As pretty as ever I saw," I answered.

"No more than that?" she said, pouting.

"I cannot see much of you," I replied, thinking that her man's dress did not conceal the woman in it.

"You shall see no more," she said, drawing the cloak about her.

"Shall you take your ground in it?" I asked, laying my hand upon her shoulder.

"Aye, that I shall!" she returned

"It will be easy to hit," I said.

"I care not," she replied in a low voice, turning her head aside.

"Were you pleased with the rascal I brought you?" I asked, for I was in fear of making her sad, and that she would lose heart when it was too late to turn back.

“ ‘ Rascal ’ ! ” she exclaimed. “ Why, he is a prince among tailors! ”

“ He will be silent,” I said.

“ Aye, that he will, for I will close his lips,” she returned, quickly.

“ How will you do it? ” I asked.

“ I have promised him a knighthood.”

“ A knighthood? ” I cried out in amazement.

“ Aye, wherefore not? ” she answered. “ Is he not a most excellent breeches-maker, and a knight among tailors? Why should there not be a Knight of the Breeches, as well as a Knight of the Carpet since no knights fight nowadays? ”

“ But how shall you fulfil your promise? ” I asked.

“ This night week my Lord Duke comes to supper to me,” she replied. “ When he has drunk much wine, as he is used, then he shall lay his august sword upon Master Tailor’s worthy shoulder. So I shall fulfil my promise, and thereby also humble his Grace when he learns it in the morning.”

To this I made no answer, for my cousin’s daring bereft me of speech.

We had now come to the Nine Acres, and the

coach halted. A little way in front another coach was standing, and I knew that we were not the first to arrive. Of this I was glad, for with little delay there would be little light to give good aim.

I was about to lift my cousin from the coach, but she pushed me aside, whispering that if my wits did not grow quicker I should yet betray her, and sprang out unaided.

Under a tree I saw three men standing, and one of them was Roger Delaney. As we approached the ground my cousin turned to me and said—

“Cousin Theo, if I fall let no one touch me or remove my cloak. Whether I die or not I would not have them know that I am a woman,” and her voice faltered a little.

So I promised that I would not.

The others now came out and bowed to us. When my cousin had made her bow she turned her back upon them, and so she waited while we measured the ground. Nor did her conduct seem strange to them, seeing that they knew it was a quarrel between kinsmen, and so most bitter.

Then I loaded the pistols and gave one of them

to my Lady Betty, whispering to her as I did so, that she should fire low.

When Roger Delaney saw that his opponent did not remove the cloak he declared that neither would he, for that it was not his wont to take any such advantage. Nor would he consent to wait until the morning was brighter, albeit his second pleaded for this, as indeed he might, since his principal was so short of sight.

Then they took their ground, having their backs towards each other. I watched my cousin eagerly, but she betrayed no tremor. The physician opened his bag and took from it some lint and bandages, for he had been out before with Roger Delaney.

In all my life I had never felt such suspense as I did while I watched my cousin and Roger Delaney standing and waiting for the word to turn round and fire. At last it came. Then two shots rang out together; nor could I tell which had fired the first. My eyes were fastened upon my cousin. She was still standing, and had lowered her pistol, from which the smoke was curling. Then I turned and looked at Roger Delaney. He, too, was standing, but he

seemed dazed. A bullet had struck him in the hip.

I ran to my Lady Betty. She turned and looked at me. In her eyes I saw surprise, and something else; but what it was I could not tell. My joy was so great to find her unhurt that I could scarce remember any longer that she was a man. I think it was the cloak after all that saved her, for it did not fit very well, and there was a ragged hole above the left shoulder, which showed that Roger Delaney's bullet had not gone so far amiss.

I turned to him now; but he was sorely wounded, and would fire no more to-day, nor for many days to come.

Then I seized my cousin's arm and led her a little nearer to where the physician was kneeling by Roger Delaney, and making a bow to them and to the other, who stood upright by them, we hurried across the field to where our coach was waiting.

My Lady Betty was very silent while we drove back to the city. She seemed weary, and her face was pale. As I looked at her for the first time the thought came to me that my beautiful cousin might one day grow old.

I returned with her to her house, which I believed we entered unnoticed, for it was still early, and few save the watchmen about. Here she left me for a space and then returned to me dressed as a woman, and so I confess I loved her better, albeit she made a gallant fellow enough.

“The coach is still without,” she said, “and I would not have him remain longer. Can you take him to his lodging?”

I bowed without speaking, and, leaving her, went to the boudoir. As I passed through the corridor I saw the tailor descending the stair. He glanced at me and smiled, but did not speak; so I went in and found the clothes lying upon the couch as they had been. I gathered them into my arms and carried them to the bedchamber. Phil Blake still lay in a deep slumber, as the physician had said he was like to. I had little difficulty to dress him, for he lay still, only groaning a little when he was moved; but he did not open his eyes. Then I knew for sure that he had been drugged after that he had drunk deep.

When I had dressed him, I took him in my arms and carried him to the coach without difficulty, for

though I was weary my arms were strong. As I did so, I saw the watchman looking at us, but he did not speak, thinking doubtless that the man whom I carried had drunk overmuch at her ladyship's ball, and seeing nothing strange in it.

Then I went back to my cousin and told her what I had done.

She made no answer to me, neither did she thank me. So I took her hand to bid her farewell, and was raising it to my lips when she drew it back and presented her cheek to me.

When I had saluted her, I bowed and went down the stair again to the coach. I left Phil Blake in bed in his lodging, and then returned to my own. On the morrow I sought him again, and found him come to himself indeed, but yet much bewildered to think what had befallen him.

So I told him how he had met Roger Delaney as he had said he would, and showed him his cloak where the ball had gone through it.

"If you have any further doubt," said I, "Roger Delaney can put your mind at ease, for he has a fine hole in him at this minute."

At this he started up in bed.

“Where did I hit him?” he cried out, eagerly.

“In the hip-joint,” I answered.

“Then he’ll never walk straight again,” he said.

“So I think myself,” I replied.

“It is strange,” said he again; “but I had forgotten it, and so I must have drunk deep.”

To this I made no answer.

In a fortnight afterwards his Excellency supped with my Lady Betty, and having drunk deep, and being at the same time eager to make his peace with my cousin, he did after supper make the worthy tailor kneel before him, according to her ladyship’s desire, and, having struck him with his sword upon the head—for in truth his hand was somewhat unsteady—bade him rise up a Knight. And though his Grace was fain to forget it when his head was grown cooler in the morning, yet would not my cousin suffer it to be forgotten; and so the tailor kept his knighthood, while her ladyship lost his Grace’s favour.

But for this, I think, she cared little, seeing that she loved Phil Blake, and had not forgiven my Lord Duke the slight that he had put upon her.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ENEMY OF HIS GRACE.

FOR a time I was in some fear lest my Lord Duke should feel anger against me for the trick which my cousin had played upon him, but in this I was mistaken, for in no way, either by word or by deed, did his Excellency show to me that he remembered how Lady Betty had served him. True it was that the Viceroy no longer followed in her ladyship's train, but this was not surprising, seeing how much his Grace loved new faces, and if one beauty treated him cruelly, which did not so often happen as I think he deserved, was wont readily to find comfort in the kindness of another.

At my cousin's house I met many who, it was well known, were no friends of the Viceroy, and amongst them was Donal. This surprised me the more since he was in the Viceroy's service even as I was myself, and yet I found him consorting with the enemies of his Grace, and seeming as though he loved them and had their confidence. And, albeit I too was cousin

to Lady Betty, and nearer in kinship, yet my face, or it may be the colours that I wore, seemed to disagree with many of them, for they greeted me coldly and with wry faces.

But seeing I had not gone thither to win their fair words or to make them courtesies, this did not trouble me greatly, but only so far that I resolved to be more watchful of Donal, so I might perchance discover what game he was playing in the dark.

I confess I had hoped to find Miss Yelverton amongst my cousin's guests, but she was not. At length I took heart of grace to inquire concerning her of Lady Betty, and as carelessly as I might.

Lady Betty laughed.

"Have you been taking lessons from the parish clerk?" she cried out.

"I do not understand," I said.

"Since there is no heart in your voice."

"It is too low to be near the lips."

"Because she is absent?"

"It is a good reason."

"When you speak to a woman," she returned, softly.

"You have not answered me," I said.

"She has not yet returned to the city."

"When she does, I may seek her here?"

"Is it love, Toby?" Lady Betty asked, and her voice was very gentle, as though there was pity in it.

"I know not, but yet I would meet her again."

"Poor cousin Toby!"

"Why do you pity me?"

"Because there is more sorrow than joy in loving," and she sighed.

"I would ask her a question."

"And if she refuse to answer it?"

"I should seek to find an answer to it myself."

"The question?"

"Why she entreated me to fire dumb, and why her father did not kill me."

"I fear she will not answer it."

"Do you know the answer?"

"I cannot tell you."

"I looked to find in you a friend," I said, bitterly.

"Believe me that I am your friend and—and your debtor," she cried, seizing my hand. "But the secret does not belong to me."

So I left her, feeling greatly puzzled, and determined to find out for myself. But for some time I was so occupied with another matter of weighty importance that I had no leisure for my design.

I had but a slight acquaintance with my Lord Galtymore, albeit when I was new to the Court, and possessed of little knowledge of the world, he had done me no small service. For this I was very grateful, and eager as well to show my gratitude, yet I knew not how I should ever do it, seeing that my lord had no liking for his Excellency, my master, any more than had his friend Mr. Grattan. Indeed, at the time I made no doubt but that it was Mr. Grattan that had made my Lord Galtymore so bitter against his Grace as to declare that the Duke of Rutland had come to drink the Irish into good humour, while Mr. Pitt laid his plans for the undoing of the country.

At first his Grace was at much pains to make him a friend, for it was ever more agreeable to his temper to make friends than foes, and it was hard to resist him when he was minded to win the love of man or woman. But the Earl of Galtymore was not to be won, and it was told to his Grace that he had even declared that

he desired no meeting with the Viceroy until he could meet him as a private person at ten or fifteen paces. So his Excellency, finding him obdurate, no longer made friendly advances towards him.

Her Excellency, too, was very gracious to the Earl, and would fain have brought him to her feet, for my lord was accounted the handsomest man in the city, and was taller by half a head than his Grace of Rutland. He was big and fair, and his hair fell in ringlets upon his broad shoulders, for he did not fasten it in a queue. I think her Grace was piqued and not a little displeased because Lord Galtymore seemed to have but a cold heart in spite of his fair face and golden hair, and that, too, albeit she was not used to show her favour lightly. So she was gracious or cold to my lord by turns, whereat he seemed puzzled as though he did not understand.

Now his Grace of Rutland, as all the world knows, loved nothing—not even the wine-cup nor the gaming-table—so well as he loved the face of a pretty woman, nor did he love it the less if it was denied to him; and of all the fair ladies of the city there was none more beautiful or prouder than the Countess

of Galtymore, not even my Lady Betty, albeit she had more wit and a readier tongue. Since his quarrel with my cousin over the affair of the tailor whom he had made a knight, when in his cups, to please her, his gay and fickle Grace had changed his allegiance to my Lady Galtymore. This pleased me well at the time, for the wagging of evil tongues against my cousin's reputation was little to my liking, and I was glad when they forgot to speak ill of Lady Betty. And yet I was grieved for my lord, and not a little fearful to think how it would end, seeing that the Earl was jealous of his honour and bore his Excellency no goodwill.

But as time went on, and the Duke grew every day less guarded in his manner toward the Lady Galtymore, I could only wonder at my lord's indifference. So it came about that those who had spoken evil of the Countess, pitying her lord because she was betraying him, now sharpened their tongues against my lord, saying many things which I bore with much impatience, because I could do nothing, seeing that I loved his Grace and owed much kindness to the Earl.

But my lord seemed never to notice what was said,

and only to care for the card-table, at which it was said he lost great sums that he could ill afford, for he was a poor man. He drank much wine, too, and was often in the company of Mr. Grattan, who was no less an enemy of his Grace than my lord, as Mr. Orde, the Duke's secretary, assured his Excellency, after that Mr. Grattan had declared that until Ireland should be freed from debt he would never consent to the appropriation of a single penny of the surplus revenue for the purposes of the empire. His Grace was much put out at this, for I think he had pledged himself to Mr. Pitt that it would be otherwise, and he made no doubt that the Earl of Galtymore was at the bottom of it all, nor did he refrain from telling his opinion to those about him, as perhaps a wiser man would have done.

So, as I have said, his Excellency, the more he hated my lord the more he showed his favour to my lady, and this pleased her ladyship well, for, as it seemed, she cared for nothing so much as to be thought more beautiful than the Duchess of Rutland. Neither were there wanting those who told her that she was so, and they had no love for my lord.

Now I would have wagered my life that there was not in all Ireland a braver man nor one who fired straighter than the Earl, as was but natural, seeing that it was in Tipperary he had first smelt powder. And yet his conduct at my Lord Charlemont's rout filled me so with amazement that I knew not what to think of him afterwards, nor how to gainsay what was said of the matter.

I happened to be standing near a group of the Duke's friends when my lord passed close to us. While he was yet within hearing Major Hutchinson, who was ever very ready to show his loyalty to the Duke, declared that the Earl was but a complaisant fellow and unworthy to give his name to so fair a lady as the Countess.

I turned to look at my lord. He had stopped suddenly, as though he would turn back, and the blood dyed his temples crimson. Then again he grew very pale, and as he turned away I thought I read in his face a great anguish. Watching his back as he passed through the crowd, Major Hutchinson laughed with scorn, and the others who were with him joined in his laughter.

For several days afterwards I inquired eagerly if any friend of my lord had waited upon Major Hutchinson, but when a week had passed and still the Earl had made no sign, my heart grew heavy with grief and despair that the Earl had no thought for his honour, and because men were now saying openly that the Lord Galtymore was not only complaisant but a coward to boot, since he could not be brought to play the man.

And all the while my lord seemed never to mind what was said of him, albeit he smiled less often than heretofore, and was grown to look many years older.

One night I entered the Eagle tavern in Eustace Street. As I pushed my way through the crowd that stood at the threshold discussing some deeply important matter, if I might judge from the earnestness with which they spoke, and came to the card-tables, I could scarce credit my own eyes with belief in what I saw, for, seated at the same table and facing one another, with the cards between them, were the Earl of Galtymore and Major Hutchinson.

Hardly knowing what I did, I approached the table and stood near to them. It was a rigorous game, and

my lord was losing. A pile of gold lay beyond the middle line of the green cloth and near to his opponent, whose cheeks were flushed and his eyes bright, as though he found it no easy matter to conceal his triumph. My lord was very pale, and scarce moved his head when he passed the guineas across the table. It was some time before I heard either of them speak. Then I saw Major Hutchinson throw down the ace of hearts—for it was the game of Twenty-five that they played. Upon this my lord placed the knave of trumps. His opponent stretched out his hand, thinking, doubtless, that the trick was his.

“It is the knave,” said my lord.

“I thought it was the king,” the other returned.

“Your mistake is not unnatural, sir,” the Earl answered, coldly.

“How so, my lord?” Major Hutchinson inquired.

“Seeing that it can be no strange thing to you to find a knave in the place of a king,” said my lord very calmly.

“Do I take your meaning, my lord?” Hutchinson asked, pushing back his chair a little.

“It would be little credit to your understanding to mistake it,” the Earl returned.

“’Twould be a pity to waste time,” said Hutchinson.

“It would so,” answered my lord, “for it is late in the day.”

“I waited on your lordship’s convenience,” Hutchinson retorted, “and I had grown almost to fear——”

“What?” asked my lord.

“That I should grow old ere I found my Lord Galtymore at leisure,” said the major, with a smile.

“I crave your pardon that I did not kill you sooner,” my lord answered, “but indeed I had no leisure. Shall we say at the first stroke of three?” and he looked at the clock.

“I am your lordship’s servant to command,” the other answered.

“With so much green between us?” my lord asked, pointing to the cloth which covered the table.

The major bowed. Then both men looked to the priming of their fire-irons, while I stood by, not knowing what to do, seeing that I had but slight acquaintance with either of them and was little more

than a lad, and so dared not offer my services. I knew, too, that I could scarce be acquitted of dishonour, because I had listened to a conversation which they had striven to make private by speaking very low.

My lord stood up, and taking the corner of the cloth next to him he cast the other end to his opponent, who seized it and drew back a little until the cloth was tight, and that was at, as I judged, about five paces. I glanced at the clock and made out that it was three or near to it. While I was still looking the clock struck, and at the second stroke was the sound of a pistol. It was my lord's and as he folded his arms, waiting, the smoke curled from the barrel. Then, seeing that the other did not fire, but remained standing with his pistol pointed at my lord's breast, the Earl grew impatient.

"I await your fire, sir," he said.

At this Major Hutchinson lowered the barrel of his pistol a little, and then I understood why he did not fire, for the cock was down, and the pistol it was that had betrayed him.

My lord too perceived what was amiss.

“I take advantage of no man’s misfortunes,” said he; “see to your priming before we are interrupted.”

A spasm of pain for a moment distorted Hutchinson’s face into a terrible smile. He opened his mouth as though he would speak. There was a gurgling sound in his throat, and then the blood gushed from his lips, staining the green that lay between them. He reeled forward and fell heavily at my lord’s feet.

Now the Eagle tavern was the favourite rendezvous of those belonging to the Court, so that his Grace lacked no friends amongst them that sat at the card-tables, nor could I discover any whom I could call with assurance a friend of the Earl of Galtymore.

When they saw Major Hutchinson fall, and knew for certain that he was dead, for the bullet had pierced his lung, their anger was very great.

Some who knew nothing of the matter cried out that he had been murdered, because he was the friend of his Excellency, and that the Earl was a traitor.

At this many drew their swords, and approached my lord in a threatening manner. My lord, too, drew his sword, and stood looking at them, smiling very pleasantly, as though the sight of their angry faces

amused him, and he had no fear for his life. And so the Earl faced them, but they, seeing him resolute, hesitated, keeping out of the reach of his sword—even those who had most boldly denounced my lord as a coward.

I, too, had drawn, and was standing near the Earl, but a little behind him. As he turned sideways he saw me, for I do not think he had observed me before, and laughed out—

“What, Mr. Dillon,” he cried, “are not my enemies many enough that you must add to their number?”

My face flushed with shame, that he had so mistaken me.

“I am no enemy, my lord,” I cried, “but a friend, and so my sword is at your service, however little you may think of it.”

“A man might well be proud to win the friendship and sword of a Dillon,” my lord answered, with a bow, “and if I wronged you I ask your pardon for my error, but indeed in these days it is grown the fashion for friends to turn enemies.”

“It is a fashion that I have no wish to follow,” I answered.

He bowed again, and then, turning to the others, who were no little discomfited because I had declared myself on the side of my lord, seeing that I was also in his Excellency's service, he inquired if they wished to proceed further in the matter.

On this, one of them came forward, dropping the point of his sword, and said that they accused the Earl of Galtymore of having murdered Major Hutchinson.

Whereupon I cried out that it was false, but the Earl, smiling, lifted his hand to silence me, and said, "Let the gentleman proceed."

Then he said that my lord should not leave the tavern until the Captain of the Watch was come. So my lord made him a low bow, and putting up his sword again, turned to me.

"Are you indeed my friend?" he asked, in a low voice.

"I am, indeed, my lord," I answered.

"My life is in no small danger, I think," he said.

"I can prove——" I began.

"Nothing, save that you are my friend, and that may ruin you without saving me," he answered.

"Be the risk what it may, I accept it," I said.

“Then I take an hour of your life to save what is left me of mine,” he said. “Go without delay to Mr. Grattan. Tell him what has happened, and say that he must do what he thinks fitting, but that Galtymore must not be saved at the expense of his country. He will understand.”

I said that I would carry out his instructions most faithfully, and begged to know if he had any other message to send.

At this his face grew dark again.

“Indeed there is one thing, but I tax your friendship sorely.”

I answered him that it was not so.

“Then,” he said, with some difficulty, and in a voice which had none of the sound of battle left in it, “when you leave Mr. Grattan, go to my lady and bid her from me to burn the papers which are in the yellow box. That is all.”

So I left him standing near to where the dead man was lying, and passed out of the tavern with my hand on my sword, for I had little liking for the looks that followed me.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LADY GALTYSMORE.

As soon as I reached Dame Street I hailed a coach, for I was not yet grown to like travelling by chair, and drove to Mr. Grattan's house. I had small hope to find him at home, for indeed he was as likely to be at the house of any of his friends as at his own. Yet I was more fortunate than I feared I should be, for his house when I reached it was very gay, and the windows ablaze with light. The sound of voices and of much laughter assured me that Mr. Grattan was entertaining guests.

The footman, thinking doubtless that I, too, was a guest, would have ushered me into the supper room, had I not perceived his intention and bidden him tell his master that I desired to speak to him on a matter of the highest importance. On this he led me to a handsome room on the other side of the hall, which I judged to be the library, for the walls were covered with books.

I had not waited long before Mr. Grattan himself came in. He was dressed in scarlet, faced with dark green, the uniform of the Dublin Independent Volunteers, of whom he was colonel, and which he much affected. Despite his uniform he did not make a very warlike figure, for he was of low stature with uncommonly long arms. Neither was his countenance very engaging, except when he was minded to be exceedingly gracious, but his eyes were as bright as ever I saw.

I perceived that he was but little pleased with my visit, and had I any doubt upon this score he did not leave me long under any misapprehension.

“I am much honoured,” he said, when he had bowed to me, “that you should have been at so much trouble to come to me at an hour which is, I doubt not, very inconvenient to you. That we may not waste the precious hours of the night, which are not for business, but for rest and”—he added, with a smile and a half glance toward the door—“refreshment, let me repeat to you, sir, what I have already said to Mr. Orde, that his Grace is informed of my opinion upon this question.”

I gazed at Mr. Grattan in amazement, for I could not think what this matter was to which he referred.

"You are mistaken, sir," I said, at last, "for I do not bear any message from his Excellency."

"Then in the name of the devil, sir," he cried out with some heat, "tell me what your business is, and be quick in doing it, for I have left my punch cooling on the table, and Curran in the middle of as good a story as ever I heard, to show my loyalty to his Grace, and now it is only——"

"My Lord Galtymore," I said, quietly.

"Ha, Galtymore," he cried, looking at me with his keen eyes. "What of my Lord Galtymore?"

Then I told him what had happened at the Eagle, and gave him my lord's message. When he heard it he was much disturbed, and several times strode up and down the room, holding his chin in his hand and murmuring to himself as though he had forgotten my presence.

Then he turned to me again with a smile which became him mightily, and thanked me, saying that I had brought him bad news with so much good-will, that he could hardly regret the cause of making

acquaintance with a young man of so much wisdom and discretion. He begged me to join him in drinking a bowl of punch, but I prayed him to forgive me if I took my departure without delay.

“As you will, sir,” he said, with a smile, while he swayed to and fro like a pendulum; “for I cannot put an old head on young shoulders; and yet there are many who would give a year of their lives for an hour of such company.”

So when I assured him that it was not my desire, but my duty, which bade me refuse, I bowed and left him.

My meeting with Mr. Grattan pleased me mightily, albeit I was no little surprised that he seemed to think much of the inconvenience which Major Hutchinson’s death might occasion to his plans, and little of my lord’s danger. But then, I thought, he was scarce likely to discover his real feelings in the matter to one so young as I, and whose only commendation was that I was a friend of the Earl, albeit this, too, he might distrust, seeing that I was in the service of the Viceroy. I made no doubt that he would do what he could to save my lord, since he

could ill spare from his party so great an enemy of his Excellency as the Earl was.

As soon as I left Mr. Grattan I made haste to deliver the message to my Lady Galtymore. On my way thither I turned aside to inquire at the Eagle how it fared with the Earl, and there learned that, a little before, my lord had been carried to Newgate.

When I reached Marlborough Street, where was the Earl of Galtymore's house, I began to wonder how I should tell my lady the news. Indeed, I now felt much less assurance than I felt in Mr. Grattan's presence, and it was a strange hour to seek a lady's presence.

Nor would I have succeeded in reaching my lady's ear had I been less resolute, for I was informed that her ladyship was but returned from a rout at the Earl of Charlemont's house, and had given orders that no one was to be admitted to her presence, and so I should wait till the morrow.

But I declared that my business was of so urgent a character that it might not be postponed, and that I bore a message from my lord which was for my lady's

ear and none else's. On hearing this the Countess consented to receive me in her morning room.

She was standing when I entered, and I knew that the servants had not lied to me when they said that she was but returned from a rout.

She was dressed in a yellow silk, with diamond stomacher and sleeve knots. In her hand she held a large black hat trimmed with yellow ribbon, and adorned with a great abundance of jewels. She was as beautiful, if not quite so tall, as my Lady Betty, and those who charged her with pride did her no injustice, for she carried her head as though she were a queen.

I bowed low before her on the threshold, and she came forward a little, I thought, with some eagerness. Then she suddenly drew back and looked at me, a great anger upon her brows.

"How dare you break in upon me," she cried. "Does his Excellency think that there is no man left in Ireland that he insults me again and in my own house?"

"His Excellency!" I exclaimed, for my amazement was so great that I could scarce find words to speak.

“Aye, his Excellency,” she answered, with much scorn, while her fingers played with the jewels in her hat. “I’d warrant a shoe-boy would play the King better than his Grace.”

“Indeed, I do not understand,” I said, as calmly as I could, albeit I had reason to be angry at her words.

“Nor do I understand,” she answered, quickly, “why you have come hither.”

“If you will suffer me to speak,” I replied, “I will tell you.”

“Speak, then,” she said, “and quickly, for I am weary,” and I think she was, for she sank upon a seat as though the rest was very agreeable to her.

“I bear a message from my Lord Galtymore,” I began.

“Galtymore!” she exclaimed. “Why, are you not the friend of his Grace of Rutland?”

I bowed my head, for I could not deny it, and yet I was in despair to think she would not permit me to deliver my message.

“How then can you be my lord’s friend also?” she asked, but with less anger.

"I am so," I replied, "and to prove it, my lord desires you to burn the papers that are in the yellow box."

"Ha!" she exclaimed, watching me narrowly, "then you are indeed the friend of Galtysmore."

"I have said that I am," I answered.

"Why does not my lord come to me himself?" she asked; and her voice was very soft.

"That he cannot," I said, "for he is prevented by a grave matter."

"A grave matter," she repeated, rising to her feet and coming nearer to me. "Tell me of this matter."

Then seeing that I hesitated, she cried out proudly—

"Have no fear, for the Countess of Galtysmore will do no discredit to the bravest man in Ireland."

Then I told her that Major Hutchinson was dead, and how the Earl had killed him.

"Is my lord safe?" she asked.

"In Newgate," I answered.

She turned her head aside, so that I could see only her cheek. She seemed to be thinking, so I did not speak, but only watched her.

“My lord has many enemies,” she said, musingly.

“And more friends,” I answered.

“I am far from denying it,” she returned, making me a courtesy, and smiling as though my friendship for the Earl was very sweet to her. “But his Excellency is powerful, and would ruin my lord, and I have given his Grace——” but here she broke off in some confusion.

“So, too, is Mr. Grattan,” I said, seeing that she did not speak; “and he would save my lord at all hazard.”

“I would it were so,” she answered, gloomily, “but I fear me that it is not.”

“Surely you wrong him,” I cried out, “for Mr. Grattan loves the Earl beyond everything in the world.”

“Except his country,” she replied, sadly; “and that is what I most fear for my lord lest they give him up to his enemies and say that it is for the good of the country, as they are wont to do when they put their trust in an English minister.”

At this I held my peace, for I knew that Mr. Grattan’s friends said this same thing of him. Then see-

ing that she was very weary, for, indeed, the dawn was already breaking into the room and making the light of the candles seem faint, I begged her to believe that, albeit I was in the Duke's service, the Earl had no stauncher friend than I, as I was prepared to prove, even at the sacrifice of his Grace's friendship and my own fortune, for it was in my mind to bear witness for the Earl, if need be, even against the friends of his Excellency.

So she thanked me very graciously, praying me to forgive her that she had mistaken me. "For," she said, "it is no easy matter to discern a friend from a foe."

Then when I would have left her she gave me her hand. So I kissed her fingers where the jewels did not cover them, and again bowing low, I left her and went out.

The whole city was agog the next day when it was known that the Earl of Galtysmore was to be tried for his life before the House of Peers.

At every coffee-house and tavern men seemed to have no other business than to speak good or evil of my lord. In the House, too, albeit they were still

speaking on Mr. Secretary Orde's motion, I made no doubt that few thought of it or of anything save my lord's trial. Only his Grace was silent on the matter, and that puzzled me not a little, seeing that Major Hutchinson was his friend and had in a sort died in his service. Neither could I discover for certain how the trial was likely to end, or who would be my lord's accusers, and so, because I had no new thing wherewith to comfort my Lady Galtymore, I did not seek her, fearing that what I knew would only grieve her the more.

At last I learned that the day had been fixed for the trial, and that it would be holden, not in the House of Lords, which was thought to be too small, but in the House of Commons, which, being much larger, could more conveniently accommodate the great number who desired to be present and who, indeed, seemed to be every one in Ireland.

It was, I think, about two days before the trial when, as I was returning to the Castle, I beheld Mr. Grattan taking leave of Mr. Secretary Orde. I passed near to him as he strode with his great steps to his chair, which was a little way off, and made no doubt

that he had seen me, but if he did he made no sign. I felt certain that he had visited Mr. Orde for no other purpose than to speak of my lord's trial, and I wondered how the meeting had ended, remembering what my Lady Galtysmore had said to me of Mr. Grattan.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EARL'S TRIAL.

I HAVE never beheld a more brilliant assemblage than that which came to see my lord tried for his life. The galleries of the House were filled with the Commons and their friends, and amongst them I easily found a place.

The Speaker's chair had been gorgeously decorated for the Lord Chancellor, and in the body of the House were a number of seats covered with scarlet cloth, set apart for the peeresses and their daughters. The floors, too, had been newly carpeted in honour of so great an occasion, and altogether the House was the most beautiful chamber that I had ever seen.

As I looked about me I caught sight of Mr. Grattan. He was wearing his volunteer uniform, and seemed in high good humour. Beside him was Sir John Parnell, to whom, doubtless, he was narrating some humorous tale, swaying to and fro as his wont was, and both of them laughed very heartily. A little

farther from me Mr. Flood was engaged in earnest converse with Mr. Yelverton and Mr. Curran, and I judged from their looks that they were more concerned about my lord's fate than was Mr. Grattan. As I looked at Mr. Curran's decrepit figure and yellow face, I could scarce credit him with a reputation for wit and courage such as he undoubtedly possessed and deserved.

From them I turned to the body of the House. Already the scarlet-clothed seats were filled with a brilliant company, all except one seat which faced the Speaker's chair. Now I could not tell for whom this seat was set apart, for it was well known that neither her Grace of Rutland nor his Excellency would be present at the trial. Near to this seat sat the Duchess of Leinster, and I thought that she seemed sad and distressed, albeit round about her was no lack of laughter nor gaiety, for my Ladies Shannon, Charlemont and Delvin seemed as merry as though they had come to a wedding, and not to see a man on trial for his life.

This was in my mind when Sir Lucius O'Brien came up and greeted me in a very friendly fashion,

albeit I had little liking for him. Then, assuming an air of great sorrow, he said, "His Excellency has lost a valued friend."

I bowed without answering.

"I never knew a man," he went on, "of readier courage or of quicker wit."

"If his pistol had been as quick as his wit, sir," I said, "he might have saved his life."

"Very true, sir," he answered; and then he said, sinking his voice, "his Excellency has no more loyal servant than Sir Lucius O'Brien."

"His Grace has no doubt of your loyalty," I replied, turning from him.

"This I tell you in private, that his Grace may rely upon my services," he went on.

"You may be confident that I shall not betray your secrets to his Excellency," I answered, coldly.

I thought he was about to say more, but at this moment there was a sudden hush about me, and all eyes were turned upon the body of the House. I, too, leaned forward and looked down.

The Countess of Galtymore had entered the chamber. She walked slowly towards the vacant seat

near to her Grace of Leinster, and as she went my eyes as well as my heart followed her. She was clad in a long black robe, and wore a black cap upon her hair. Her head was bent as she walked, so that I could not see her face; but when she was come near to the Speaker's chair, she raised her eyes for a moment very proudly, then dropping them again, she sat down, and I saw that her face was very pale and her eyes heavy.

The murmur which followed my lady's entrance had scarce died away when the doors were thrown open again and my Lord Chancellor Lifford entered. He looked very stately in his gold-embroidered robe, and carried a white wand in his hand. Behind him followed the peers, save the bishops, in full dress, but my Lord Charlemont wore his uniform as Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers. When he reached the chair, the Lord Chancellor turned round and bowed twice, turning to the right and to the left. After this he took his seat—as did the lords also, when they had bowed to the Chancellor—in silence, nor did any one speak, not even a lady. As soon as the lords were seated, Ulster King-of-Arms entered, walking

with very stately steps and wearing his tabard. On his left arm he carried a shield, upon which the Earl of Galtymore's arms were emblazoned.

Then came the Earl himself. He was clad in deep mourning, and wore no sword. He walked slowly and with a melancholy step. His eyes, too, were fixed upon the ground, and he did not lift them until he came near to my Lord Chancellor, to whom he made a low bow. I do not think he saw my lady, for she rose a little from her seat, as though she looked for some greeting, but seeing that he passed on without looking at her she sank back again.

Then my lord stood beside the King-of-Arms, and he raised the shield until it was level with the Earl's shoulder.

Next came one in the garb of an executioner, who bore a great axe with a broad blade. The edge was of very bright steel, but save this it was all painted black. When he was come to the bar, and was on the right of the prisoner, he lifted the axe until it was as high as my lord's neck, and so he continued to hold it, but with the edge turned away from the Earl.

Suddenly a ray of the sun fell upon the blade of

the axe and glittered for an instant. At this my lord turned quickly and looked at the axe; then, as though he were ashamed of his own weakness, he drew himself up and gazed very proudly round the chamber. I turned to my lady. She was leaning a little forward, her eyes, full of horror, fixed upon the headsman, and her hands stretched out before her. For a moment I thought she would have fallen, but her Grace of Leinster, who had watched her with sorrowful eyes, put her hand upon my lady's arm, and, drawing her gently back, whispered in her ear. Whatever it was that she said, the Countess became composed again and turned her head aside, so that she might not any longer see the axe.

Then one standing at the bar read in a loud voice the charge against the Earl of Galtymore. To this my lord answered very proudly that he was not guilty of the crime alleged against him. When my lord had so answered a herald cried out, making proclamation that the witnesses against the Earl should come forward.

When the herald had ceased there was a great stillness, nor could I hear any sound save the deep

breathing of the gentlemen about me and the softer sighing of the ladies. All eyes were turned towards the bar, as the herald again cried aloud for the witnesses to come forward, calling upon them by name.

In all my life I do not think that I ever knew so terrible a moment as this, for, as the crowd which thronged the space behind the bar swayed to and fro, it seemed every instant as though a witness were come at last, and that the crowd was making way for him. Three times the herald called aloud for the witnesses, but none came forward. I looked at my lord. He carried his head erect, and his lips were smiling.

Then, after a decent interval, it was announced that since no witness had appeared to substantiate the charge against Walter, Earl of Galtymore, the trial should terminate in the accustomed manner. At this a deep murmur of applause and gratification ran through the house, but my Lord Chancellor raised his wand and then there was silence again.

Upon this his lordship rose, and in a loud voice asked if the peers of Ireland in solemn conclave assembled found that Walter, Earl of Galtymore, was

guilty or not guilty of the crime alleged against him.

Then his Grace of Leinster left his seat, and having approached the chair where my Lord Chancellor was seated he bowed before him, and placing his hand upon his heart very solemnly declared "Not guilty, upon my honour!" After his Grace came the other peers in order of their rank and did likewise, nor was there any amongst them all who did not, so that it was more than an hour before the last of their lordships had delivered his opinion.

When they had taken their seats again the Lord Chancellor rose and declared that in the opinion of the peers of Ireland, Walter, Earl of Galtymore, was not guilty of the charge preferred against him. After he had said this my Lord Lifford broke his wand into two pieces and descended from his chair.

As he did so I heard a cry, and turning my eyes from his lordship I saw that my Lady Galtymore had fallen to the ground, where she lay as though the life were gone out of her. Her Grace of Leinster strove to raise her, but before she could do so the Earl sprang forward and caught my lady in his arms.

So holding her he stood before the peers. And they came up to my lord, as they had to the Chancellor, in order of their rank, and bowed low before him, and he bowed to each of them and held his wife in his arms.

And after this I could no longer see either my lord or my lady, for the throng that was about them. So as soon as I was able I left the house and went out into the street, where a great crowd was gathered to greet the Earl, for already they knew that he had been acquitted, and were singing the Song of the Volunteers in his honour, that same song which had so offended his Grace of Rutland when he was new to the city.

So I pushed my way through the crowd and returned to the Castle. I had scarce reached my chamber when a message was brought me from the Earl of Galtymore, bidding me come at once to him at his house.

This I did without delay, for I was eager to wish my lord joy of his deliverance from danger.

“Mr. Dillon waits on your lordship,” said the lackey when I had entered.

"That he shall never do while I live," cried my lord, coming out to where I was standing. Then he took my hand and led me into the chamber. My lady stood by the window. She was no longer clad in black as before, but all in white silk with many jewels, and round her throat was a necklet of pearls. The sun was on her hair, and I saw no pride in her face, but a great joy.

"Mr. Dillon," said the Earl, when he had led me to my lady, "I know not how to thank you, and since thanks are ever sweeter from a lady's lips, my wife shall be my deputy."

"Indeed I thank you, sir," said my lady, making me a low courtesy, "for my lord and for myself, since there is no happier woman in Ireland than I am to-day."

"Nor more beloved sweetheart," exclaimed my lord, catching her hand and kissing it.

"Oh no, nor yet more loving!" she cried, throwing herself upon my lord's breast, with her white arms about his neck.

Then I understood how the Earl had killed Major

Hutchinson over the cards, after that he had borne much insult to save my lady's name, thinking that she did not love him; and she, too, believing him cold, had thought to win his love when other men praised her beauty.

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CHAPTER XIV.

A FRIEND OF HIS GRACE.

FOR some days, after the trial of the Earl of Galtymore for the killing of Major Hutchinson had ended, I was not little apprehensive that his Excellency bore me no goodwill for my share in that matter. Indeed, if I did not wrong him or my own judgment, his Grace of Rutland was grown colder and more haughty towards me than had been his wont, and this grieved me exceedingly, seeing that I loved the Duke and would readily have died for him, and yet I had no occasion to prove it, if he doubted me.

But when a few days had passed, his Grace was no longer haughty, but was become even more gracious towards me than heretofore, so that I was fain to hope that he had forgotten or forgiven me because I was the friend of the Earl of Galtymore.

So, when I received his Excellency's command to attend him on his visit to my Lord Loftus at Rath-

farnham Castle, I was greatly rejoiced and made no further doubt of his Grace's goodwill towards me, the more so as the Duke was not going in state, but with only the friends in whose company he was used to make merry.

When we set out, there went with us General Cradock, Mr. Denis Daly, Sir Hercules Langrishe and Mr. Godfrey Green, whom my Lord Duke declared to be the most honest man in Ireland, not even excepting Mr. Grattan, because he spoke evil of no man, not even when he was in his cups. And so his Grace loved him and made him his boon companion more often than he did Sir Hercules Langrishe, albeit Sir Hercules had more wit and had made pretty verses to the Duchess.

We were all mounted, for the Duke dearly loved the saddle, and would often declare that, when riding in his State coach, he envied his outriders and would fain have changed places with them, but that he feared to make the Irish disloyal, seeing how much store they set by gilded trappings.

His Excellency was in high good humour and showed me much favour, for as soon as we were clear

of the Castle, he called to me to come up and ride by him, saying that so good a horseman must needs be honest, and that, whatever men might say of him, he loved honest fellows and was honest himself, as they would yet believe, even if they did not until he had been dead a long time.

I was puzzled to think what his Grace had in his mind. I declared that no man could doubt his honour, seeing that it was as clear as the sun.

At this he laughed.

“Yet the sun is sometimes overcast,” he said, “and so is the Viceroy’s fame when pensions and peerages are denied them for whom the halter is more fitting than the coronet. Hist, is that the blackbird’s song?”

I answered that it was, for indeed a blackbird had sung out very sudden and sweet as we passed.

He did not seem to hear me, but urged on his horse with great speed.

We were clear of the city, and the grass which lined the road was pleasant for a horse’s hoofs. As we went through the villages the people cried out to us, and the men waved their hats. I thought this would

have pleased his Grace, but when I spoke of it, he answered—

“It is not for the Viceroy that they cheer.”

“Then,” I said, “it is for his Grace of Rutland.”

“Not for him neither,” he replied.

“For whom else would they cheer?” I asked.

“They mistake me,” he said, “maybe for Mr. Grattan,” and at this he smiled, no doubt thinking what a different figure Mr. Grattan made on horseback.

We had slackened our pace while we spoke together, but on seeing that the others were fast overtaking us, his Grace again put spurs to his horse and waved his hand to me to follow him. So I did, and was but little behind him when he drew rein before Rathfarnham Castle.

Some half dozen idle fellows, dressed like working-men, were lying about upon the grass and sleeping in the sunshine.

His Grace quickly dismounted and called to one of the fellows, who was nearest him, bidding him hold his horse.

“Hold the devil,” said the fellow, rudely. “It is but one man’s work. Hold him yourself.”

I was about to chastise the man for his insolence, but his Grace caught my arm and held me back. Then approaching the man, who still lay upon the grass, with an air of mock severity he demanded—

“Who are you, you rascal?”

“I am as good a man as you,” the fellow answered.

“You are a scoundrel,” said his Grace.

“You are wrong there anyhow,” was the reply, “for I wasn’t made to please you, and so I am a carpenter,” and he rose upon his elbow and looked at the Duke as though he expected his Grace to be much abashed at the news.

“Very good, Mr. Carpenter,” cried his Excellency, laughing heartily. “And what may be your name?”

“My name is as good as any in Ireland,” the fellow replied, “and so I’m not ashamed of it?”

“What is it?” the Duke asked again.

“Harry MacCabe,” the man said, proudly.

“Rise up, Sir Harry,” exclaimed the Viceroy, and struck the fellow’s shoulders very smartly with his riding-whip.

Upon this the man leapt to his feet very angrily,

and for an instant seemed as though he would rush upon his Excellency. Seeing this, I half drew my sword so that I might cut the fellow down before he could strike the Viceroy.

But his Grace stood looking into the man's eyes very calmly, and still smiling as if the humour of the thing pleased him mightily, so the man halted, seeming in much perplexity, and as though he could find no words.

"You are a bold man, whoever you are," he cried at last. "For I am the first man in the Guild."

"And I," returned the Duke, "am the first man in Ireland."

"Then you must be the devil," exclaimed the fellow, eyeing the Duke with much suspicion.

"You do me too much honour," his Grace returned, "for, indeed, I am not the devil."

"Why, then, if you are not the devil," said the man again, "you must be the Lord Lieutenant."

"And so I am," the Duke returned; "as surely as you are Sir Harry MacCabe, and I hope a loyal subject of the King's Viceroy, as all true knights should be."

“Aye, I’m loyal enough,” Sir Harry answered; “and so you’ll find Harry MacCabe when you want a friend, whatever they may say of your Excellency. Here’s my hand upon it.”

“I thank you for your friendship, Sir Harry,” said his Grace, very earnestly, taking MacCabe’s hand in his. “And not even his enemies can say that Rutland has ever forgot his friends.”

As he said this, my Lord Loftus came up, seeming much puzzled and no little amused at what he beheld. When he saw my lord, his Excellency bade Sir Harry farewell, taking his hat from his head and making him a low bow. In like manner MacCabe took leave of his Grace, and this he did gracefully enough, for he was by no means ill-looking, and was both tall and strong. So when the servants had taken our horses, the Duke turned toward the castle, leaning on my lord’s arm, and I followed them, for the others were not yet arrived.

When we were come to the entrance of the castle, I refrained from following them further, perceiving that they were conversing very earnestly, and having no small inkling of the subject of their converse, for

it was well known that my lord had set his heart on an earldom. So I turned about and waited for the others. And, indeed, they were not long in coming, and with them was my Lord Mountmorres. They seemed mightily pleased and were laughing together, all of them save the Lord Mountmorres, who appeared greatly angered, and this, I thought, added to their merriment.

I was anxious to learn what had happened to make them so merry, so after they had dismounted, I drew Mr. Godfrey Green aside and begged him to tell me. This he did with a great appearance of pleasure. On the road, he declared, they had been joined by Lord Mountmorres, who, being well mounted and desirous to exhibit his horsemanship, the more especially as it was said that his lordship had little love for hunting, rode on in front and reached the gate first. As he did so a common fellow passed out and shut the gate. His lordship very imperiously bade him open the gate again, so that the company might pass through. But to this the fellow made no reply, and his lordship cried out very angrily—

“Open the gate, you scoundrel, for I am the Lord Viscount Mountmorres.”

“Then, my lord,” answered the man, very calmly, “you are as ill-mannered a fellow as ever bestrode a good-looking horse.”

At this my lord was exceeding wroth—for he sits a horse like a tailor—and he struck the fellow sharply on the shoulder with his riding-whip.

For a moment I thought it would go ill with my lord, for the fellow rushed forward as if he would tear him from the saddle. But then, whether through fear or not, because Mountmorres had drawn his sword, he fell back, and though his face was pale with anger he spoke calmly.

“My lord,” he said, standing before the horse, “I am a friend of the Duke of Rutland.”

“So says many another knave,” cried his lordship, almost beside himself with passion.

“’Tis very true,” the fellow answered. “But sure his Grace it is that knows the differ between an honest man in his own brogues and a knave on a borrowed horse. Pass on, my lord, and before the sun rises again you will hear of Harry MacCabe.”

“ I think my lord would have like to cut the fellow down for his insolence, but without a word he sheathed his sword again and rode on, while the man drew aside and watched him with a smile.

“ A pretty quarrel, is it not? ”

I answered that it was, for I was thinking that it would not end there, and knew not that I, too, was to have some share in the matter, and to earn forever after the hatred of my Lord Viscount Mountmorres.

But in a little while I had clean forgot Sir Harry MacCabe and his[’] quarrel with Viscount Mountmorres; and so, I think, had my lord, for it was not easy to be angry in the presence of his Excellency.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR HARRY.

THE Duke was as gay as ever I had seen him, and drank much champagne, begging my Lord Loftus to pardon him because he did not drink buttered claret as the rest of us did.

“Your heart is with us, none the less, my Lord Duke,” said Mr. Green, raising his glass and bowing to his Grace.

“That it is indeed,” answered his Excellency, “now and ever. Even when my reason is against you, no man can say that my heart is not with the Irish.”

“That, your Grace, is but a question of manners,” said Sir Hercules Langrishe. “I have hopes that they will mend, even as have those of my Lord of Derry.”

“That is not unnatural,” answered his Grace, “seeing that my cousin Bristol is become a spiritual peer, and I am but the temporal representative of the Lord’s Anointed, his Gracious Majesty, George the Third.”

As he said this he rose to his feet with the glass to his lips, and so we all rose likewise and drank to the King from full glasses, and left not a drop. Then we sat down again, and Mr. Green whispered in my ear, for he sat next to me.

"'Tis another toast would be more to the liking of his Lordship of Derry."

"And what may that be?" I asked.

"The King of Ireland," said he.

"My wits are dull to-night," I answered, "for I do not understand you."

He put his lips close to my ear and whispered—

"Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol he is, but King of Ireland he would fain be, and may be yet, in spite of my Lord Charlemont and Mr. Flood, for the papists love him though they call him heretic."

"And his Grace——" I began.

"Loves his cousin of Bristol near as well as does Mr. Pitt," he answered, and though I pressed him he would tell me no more.

Yet I would have persevered and questioned him further had not another matter caused me to forget it for the moment. One of the servants approached

my Lord Mountmorres and handed to him a letter, at which, when he had opened it, my lord seemed much surprised, and then, having read it through a second time, he laughed out very loudly, and yet I thought more in anger than because he found it amuse him.

On this his Grace begged to know what was written in the letter, if it was not of so private a character that my lord would not wish to make it public.

“Indeed, none has a better right to see it than your Grace,” answered Mountmorres, “seeing that the writer declares that he is the Duke of Rutland’s friend.”

“The number of my friends is increasing, it would seem,” said the Duke, smiling pleasantly. “And who may the writer be?”

“A common fellow whom I chastised for his insolence, and so doubtless he lied,” my Lord Mountmorres replied, a little warmly, and handed the letter to the Viceroy.

“He is indeed my friend,” his Grace returned, reading the letter; “and I make no doubt that his heart is honest, seeing that he wears an old coat, and

has not changed it for a new one. And so, my lord, you will meet him."

"Your Excellency is pleased to jest," Mountmorres answered, with an uneasy smile.

"Indeed I do not jest," his Grace returned, "for the man is my friend."

"He is fortunate to win your Grace's friendship," said my lord again, "but seeing that he is base born, I know not how it would be proper for a peer of the realm to meet him in the field."

"He is no common fellow," his Excellency rejoined, and I thought he spoke with some heat, "for not five hours ago I conferred upon him the honour of knighthood."

I think at first that my Lord Mountmorres believed that this too was a jest of his Excellency, but seeing that the Duke was in no mood for jesting, he replied—

"I am your Grace's faithful, obedient servant, but I know not what gentleman will consent to meet the friend of this Sir Harry MacCabe."

"Have no fear of that," the Duke answered, and when he had said this he motioned to me to come to

him. So I arose and went to his Grace, whilst the others looked on in amazement, for in truth they seemed scarce to credit that the matter' would proceed any further, and my Lord Loftus seemed very much ill at ease.

Then his Grace asked me if I would second Sir Harry, to which I answered that I would readily, seeing that he wished it. So the Duke thanked me, saying that he desired to gratify so honest a fellow as Sir Harry, and that he would leave the matter in my hands. After this he addressed himself again to the Lord Viscount Mountmorres, telling him that Mr. Theobald Dillon would act for his friend Sir Harry MacCabe.

My lord bowed first to his Grace and afterward to me, to whom he named Sir Hercules Langrishe.

So when we had arranged that the matter should be settled with pistols, and as early as might be after sunrise, I took my leave of the company and went to seek Sir Harry, who was, I learned, at the sign of the Bull, not far off.

When I had arrived there in the coach of my Lord Loftus, I had no little difficulty in finding Sir Harry,

who was asleep. When he was awakened, which the innkeeper accomplished at no small risk to himself, the knight was very angry until he learned that an aide-de-camp of his Grace waited upon him, but when he was told this he made haste to come down to me.

“Sir Harry MacCabe,” said I.

“At your service, my lord,” said he.

“You do me too much honour,” I answered him, smiling, “for I am no lord, but only a plain gentleman.”

I think he was a little put out at this, but he quickly recovered himself.

“Sir,” he said, with much condescension, “I do not think the less of you on that account.”

“I am proud of your good opinion, Sir Harry,” I replied, bowing. Then I told him that it was his Excellency’s desire that I should second him in his quarrel.

This did not seem to please him as much as I had hoped.

“It will not please the Guild,” said he, thoughtfully, “to go outside it for a friend.”

“But the Viceroy——” I began.

“Must have his way, sir,” he answered, with great dignity.

“You can handle a fire-iron?” I asked.

“Aye, that I can, as well as another,” he replied.

“Then you have blazed before?” I said.

“Never since I was born,” he exclaimed, “but with the club I call no man my equal.”

“My Lord Mountmorres has chosen pistols,” I answered.

“That pleases me as well,” said he. “For I spoil no man’s sport, and I think I may kill him.”

“It’s as like that his lordship will kill you,” I answered, smiling.

“I’m not denying it,” said he, as he followed me from the tavern to the coach.

On our way to the castle I showed him a pair of point-blankers, with brass barrels, which I had carried with me, and he declared that they were as pretty as ever he had seen. I could not tell if he knew how to use them, for I dared not question him, lest I should offend his pride, which was now very great.

“His Excellency knows that I am his friend?” he said, when he had looked at the pistols.

I answered that it was so, for that I had myself heard his Grace declare it. At hearing this he seemed mightily pleased, and lay back in the coach smiling; so seeing that he had no wish for conversation I spoke no more with him. When we had passed the castle gate Sir Hercules Langrishe came to meet us, so we descended and bowed to him.

I think that he was surprised at the figure which Sir Harry made, for, indeed, he was graceful enough, having donned a genteel brown suit and having steel buckles on his shoes.

“Is my lord ready?” I asked.

“My Lord Viscount is ready, and so is all the company,” Sir Hercules answered, still looking at Sir Harry; and, indeed, he seemed not to be able to take his eyes from him.

Then I perceived that the haha in front of the castle was crowded with the company, and amongst them sat his Grace.

It was already past sunrise, but the dews were still upon the grass.

When Sir Harry perceived his Grace he went forward and, taking his hat from his head, made him a

low bow, to which the Duke responded graciously, waving his hand. Indeed the company, as well as his Excellency, seemed in high good humour as if they thought the matter a fine jest, which doubtless they did, for there was much merriment and laughter.

Then my Lord Mountmorres came forward, and he appeared to have no share in their merriment, for he carried himself very haughtily, and his brow was heavy with anger. I turned to Sir Harry and begged him to salute his lordship, but this he refused to do, saying that he had come to shoot the viscount and not to make him courtesies, and from this resolution I could not move him.

So when we had measured the ground, we set my lord and Sir Harry back to back with twenty paces between them, and bade them, when the signal was given, turn round and fire. When I gave the pistol to Sir Harry, in truth I had more fear for the company than for my lord, and not a little for myself. Then Sir Hercules Langrishe called out to them to fire, which they did both together.

When the smoke had cleared I saw that the bullets had gone harmless, for neither was hit. Sir Harry

still held his pistol before him, and gazed at it with no little dissatisfaction, and I thought with some distrust also.

“It is only a child’s toy,” said he, when I was come to his side, “and not to be depended on.”

My lord now called for another pistol, but this Sir Hercules refused, saying that honour was abundantly satisfied and that his Grace would not permit another pistol to be fired. On this my Lord Viscount made us a bow, and, turning on his heel, left us very haughtily.

Now, Sir Harry was as little pleased as his lordship that the matter had ended in such a manner, and so he begged me to challenge the Lord Mountmorres to meet him again with the clubs. But I answered that I dared not do so, seeing that his Grace had declared that honour was satisfied, and that this must be so, seeing that his Grace was the fountain of honour.

As I said this, I saw that his Excellency had come down from the terrace followed by the company. When we had bowed to him, the Duke came forward, and, taking Sir Harry by the hand, he called him a brave fellow, and said that he was proud of his friend-

ship. Then he cried out for wine and bade Sir Harry drink with him to a happy ending of all their troubles, which the knight did with great willingness, pledging his friend, the Duke of Rutland.

And so his Excellency made a friend of Sir Harry MacCabe and of all the Guild of Carpenters, so that none dare hiss his Grace any longer, when he rode through the city, for fear of the carpenters.

But from that day neither my Lord Viscount Mountmorres nor my Lord Loftus bore me any goodwill. Yet the time was not far off when I, too, had reason to be glad of Sir Harry MacCabe's goodwill, though I had little suspicion then that I should ever meet him again.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FUNNY CLUB.

IN truth, I found it no easy matter to serve the Viceroy and yet not be drawn into a quarrel with his Grace's enemies. These, too, seemed to grow greater in number, so that his friends were at all the more pains to defend his honour. Neither was there more reason on the side of the Duke of Rutland's friends than on the side of his enemies, for those who loved him could see no evil in him, and those who hated him denied him all virtue, even the meanest. And yet his Grace was but human, and so did err at times in judgment, though I think he never lacked the desire to be just.

An unlucky accident, too, which befell her Grace, the Vice-Queen, was like enough to breed many quarrels before it was forgotten. It was on the day that Mr. Crosbie liberated his great balloon in the Gardens of Ranelagh. Her Grace had gone thither without

escort, as it was her whim often to do; I think because it pleased her that people to whom she was not known should wonder at her beauty. Having enjoyed the spectacle mightily, for in truth there were more eyes for her Grace's beauty than for Mr. Crosbie's balloon, the Duchess set out to return to the Castle, it being not yet five o'clock in the afternoon. When she had reached Dame Street she was set upon by a band of common rascals, who assailed her Grace's lackeys with such refuse as they found ready to their hands, so that they escaped violence only with difficulty and through the speed of their horses. There was great anger at the Castle when it was learnt how the Duchess had been insulted. The Viceroy, indeed, declared that he would stay no longer amongst so ill-mannered a people, but return forthwith to England and let Mr. Pitt give his place to whomsoever he pleased.

His Grace said many things to me that I could ill listen to, for albeit I was as angry as any of them for the insult done to the Duchess, yet it seemed to me but poor justice to blame a nation for the villainy of a few common rascals.

"My Lord Duke," I said in answer, at last, "I

have no wit to defend myself against your Excellency's accusation."

"Do your countrymen depend on wit only for protection to their honour?" he asked.

"They do not," I answered him, "save when the scabbard is empty."

"And yours?" he inquired, as though he were puzzled somewhat.

"Is empty," I rejoined.

"I think I see a blade in it," he said, smiling.

"It is not mine," I said.

"Then whose may it be," he asked.

"His Grace of Rutland's," I answered, "until he give it back to me."

"That he will not," his Grace cried out, and his face grew pleasant again, "for I know not how to find so good a one! And so, Mr. Dillon, forgive me, for I am older in years than you and have not youth to justify my heat."

At his sudden graciousness I could feel no longer any anger, so I murmured that I was his Grace's faithful servant.

"That I well believe," he cried. "Now go, seek

her Grace, for I think she is angry, and unless her anger is appeased I fear she may go to England by the next packet and leave us alone to govern this unruly nation."

So I bowed and left him.

As I passed through the corridor leading to her Grace's apartments, I was not without some misgiving as to the manner in which she would receive me, for, if the Duchess was in the mood to be petulant, I knew that I could not hope to appease her so easily as I had done my Lord Duke. And in this fear I was confirmed when I saw Mr. Godfrey Green coming towards me. Now Mr. Green was of the most incorrigible cheerfulness of any man that ever I knew, and for this, and because he was good at the bottle, the Viceroy loved him. But he looked sad now, and his clothes hung upon him as though he had quarrelled with his tailor. For greeting, he shrugged his shoulders, so I passed on and did not speak to him.

Her Grace was alone when I entered; she stood near the window, and looked out into the courtyard. Her cheek was flushed, and there was anger still in her eyes, so that I could not any longer doubt that

Mr. Godfrey Green had greatly displeased her, however it was that he had blundered. This made me careful, lest I too should give offence to her Grace unwittingly. So I knelt and kissed her hand as I was wont to do. This she suffered impatiently enough, and then demanded to know why I had come to her.

“I am your Grace’s servant, madam,” I returned, “and it may be that you have commands for me.”

At this she laughed out scornfully. “It seems that I have many servants,” she cried, “and save when I need them, they are gallant fellows enough.”

This gibe might have made me angry, but that I was grown used to her Grace’s petulant moods, and I think too, that when they were past, she was more gracious than before. So I answered humbly, that when she had need of me I was ready to prove that I was worthy of her service.

“Yesterday I stood in need of the assurance,” she said, “and you did not give it to me.”

“Since my lord’s business kept me away,” I answered.

“And so you left his lady to the insults of the mob,” she broke out.

“With my life I would protect your Grace from all fear,” I said, with some heat.

“Then your life is safe, sir,” she retorted. “For I need no such protection.”

At this I knew not what to say, nor how I should please her Grace.

I think my confusion gratified her more than my pledges, for she laughed outright, crying, “You are very young, Mr. Dillon, and you have but little understanding of women.”

I bowed my head, for indeed I was in no position to deny it.

“When you understand them better,” she went on, “you will never speak to a woman of fear, for she knows no fear, save that she may one day grow old and be thought no longer beautiful. But you are young and new to the court, and so I have forgiven you. Neither have you come to weep with me as did Mr. Godfrey Green, and so I have sent him to weep for his sins, which they tell me are many.”

“ I met an old man as I came hither,” I answered, “ now I think he was Mr. Godfrey Green.”

At this she laughed, for Mr. Green was but a few years older than the Duke.

“ And yet, my lord thinks greatly of his wit,” she said.

“ Indeed, his Grace makes no mistake in that,” I returned, “ for I know few of so excellent and gentle a wit.”

“ Then I owe him little thanks for leaving his wit outside my door when he seeks my presence,” her Grace retorted, and I could not tell if she were still angry. For several moments, she stood by the window looking into the courtyard. A groom was leading a pair of grey ponies up and down. They were a new gift from his Excellency, and very beautiful.

Then her Grace turned to me again, and her face was bright and smiling. “ Have you business to-night, Mr. Dillon?” she inquired.

“ None save what your Excellency has for me,” I answered.

“ To-night,” she went on, “ I go to a rout at the Funny Club, and I would have you attend me thither.”

I bowed my head, for in truth I was much amazed, and no little disturbed at this resolve of her Grace, for I knew that she would find but few friends there. And this, too, she knew, and may be on that account was resolved to go thither, for so high was her spirit that it gave her joy to be in the midst of her enemies, and I think, too, she believed that she had the power to make friends of those who most hated her, if she was so minded.

It was little more than half after eleven when her Grace arrived at the club. There was already a great company assembled, and I wondered how they would receive the Vice-Queen. As she stood smiling beside my Lord Charlemont, the ladies, indeed, seemed as though they had not perceived her Grace's presence, but many of the gentlemen, I think, forgot their hatred of my Lord Duke, and that he and Mr. Orde had opposed Parliamentary Reform, in thinking of her Excellency's beauty. But this in truth they did not all do, and some there were who took it ill that the Earl of Charlemont did give her Grace so warm a welcome. Neither were they very careful to hide what they thought, doubtless because they did not

expect to find many friends of the Viceroy in the Funny Club. I know not how it came about that I found myself among a group of gentlemen, who were watching the Earl of Charlemont as he stood by her Grace, waiting for the signal to open the dance with the Vice-Queen.

“My Lord has forgot that he is Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Volunteers,” Sir Edward Newenham exclaimed to a raw-boned, eager-looking man that stood beside him. “See how he smiles. The voice of the siren has bewitched him, Tandy.”

“My lord’s eyes are dim,” the man returned in a shrill voice, “for he sees not that her Grace owes her complexion to the paint-pot and that her face is as false as her heart.”

“She has the wit of the devil and the guile of Circe,” said Sir Edward.

“And no more virtue, if what is said be true,” retorted the other. “And in truth those who serve her Grace are beasts, not men. In this also is she like to Circe.”

When I heard this, I was filled with anger, which I could ill control. I made a step forward toward

Mr. Napper Tandy, intending I know not what against him, but at this moment a number of persons thrust themselves between us, for the music was already playing and the dance begun.

Now that I had leisure to think, I was glad that I had done no violence, for I perceived that I would be serving her Excellency most ill if I should draw her name into so vulgar a quarrel, and that my Lord Duke would never forgive me for this, even if her Grace, being a woman, should pardon me because I sought to shield her honour. Moreover, I knew that Mr. Napper Tandy was a loud-voiced and boastful braggart, and that he would not spare her Grace's name, for that, since he claimed to be a patriot, he would see in such a quarrel great chance of winning the people's love.

So thinking of this, I resolved to lie in wait for him and pick a quarrel with him of myself when the occasion served.

The dancing lasted till half after three in the morning, and none amongst all the guests danced with so great spirit as did her Grace. My eyes followed her in the dance, now with the Earl of Charle-

mont, again with my Lord Roden or Mr. Arthur Wellesley, for she seemed never to tire or grow weary of her company, and with every hour her beauty seemed to grow more brilliant.

At length a peal of bells rang the company to the supper chamber. As I approached the door of the ball-room, I perceived Mr. Napper Tandy near me and making for the same place. A single stride brought me to his side. He strutted very proudly, as if he had a high opinion of his own importance. Then, being close to him, I trod heavily upon his foot, shifting all my weight to it. His face crimsoned with pain and anger. He looked up at me as if he expected me to ask his pardon. Then seeing that I did not, he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper—

“Sir, you have soiled my shoe.”

“Indeed, I had not noticed,” I answered, calmly, thinking to make him angry.

“You had not noticed?” he cried out, as though his breath choked him.

“Since you are so far beneath me,” I returned.

His hand sought the hilt of his sword; then he laughed.

“Your coffin will cost you all the more, Sir Aide-de-Camp,” he whispered; “pray order it at once, for I’m thinking you won’t be long in the scarlet.”

“It’s a good colour,” I answered, in the same tone, for the crowd at the door blocked our way, so that I could not be free of the fellow even if I would.

“It may be,” said he, “but you’ll be wearing the green longer.”

“How so?” I inquired.

“When the grass grows on your grave,” he retorted, with a grin.

“I think you’ll be dead before then,” I said.

“Then I’ll die before the spring,” he replied.

What more he might have said I know not, for the crowd before us had given way and I found myself in the supper chamber. As soon as the ladies were seated, I witnessed a ceremony so quaint and remarkable that I almost forgot Mr. Tandy. Every lady was presented with a Funny sash and invested with the same. The colours of the sashes were green, straw-colour and pink, and they were all of Irish manufacture, for the members of the Club had sworn to wear none other.

First my Lord Charlemont presented a pink sash to her Grace, but she laughed and put it from her, declaring that if the Earl had no sash of green for her, she would wear none. Upon this my lord, seeming greatly pleased, invested her Grace with a green sash, as she had desired, and there arose a murmur of applause, so that I knew that her Excellency had vanquished some of her enemies.

When I had taken my seat at the table, I perceived Mr. Tandy seated at the other side but a little lower down. As he caught my eye, he summoned a serving man, and, taking something from his pocket, gave it to the man, together with some command. As to this I was not long left in doubt, for the servant approached me and said—

“Mr. Napper Tandy begs that you will do him the honour to take snuff with him.” At the same time he presented to me a large silver box. Before opening it I glanced at the lid, seeking here to find some reason for this courtesy. In this I was not deceived, for I found there a representation of a man holding a pistol in his hand, while another, evidently his

antagonist, had cast away his fire-arm, and was flying at the top of his speed. Underneath were written the words—"Who's afraid?"

Now, by good luck, I had in my pocket a snuff-box which had been my grandfather's and which well answered the other's challenge, for it bore a picture of a man standing in a field, and having in his hand a smoking pistol, while opposite to him another man lay upon the ground beside his pistol, and, as it seemed, sorely wounded. The motto inscribed upon it was, "A Pill for a Puppy."

So I rose to my feet, and bowing to Mr. Tandy, I took snuff from his box. Then, drawing my own from my pocket, I gave it to the servant and ordered him to take it to Mr. Tandy, saying that Mr. Theobald Dillon would know his opinion of the snuff, as soon as he found leisure. When he received the message, Mr. Tandy bowed to me very gravely. After this he did not look at me any more, but busied himself with his supper, talking a great deal the while, as though it added to his importance to speak more than his neighbours.

I was much pleased that Mr. Tandy must meet me and yet know nothing of the reason why I had fastened a quarrel upon him, for so her Grace's name would not be connected with the affair.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUCHESS'S KNIGHT.

As soon as the ladies had done supper they returned to the back room and the dancing began again. They made a very brilliant spectacle, for all wore Funny sashes of different colours, but most of them had chosen green, as her Excellency had done.

There was scarce any pause in the dance, and never had I seen ladies so unwearied, yet I think they were spurred to greater endeavor by the example of the Duchess of Rutland, and, it may be, they hoped to rival her as well in the dance as in beauty.

At half after six, the wearied musicians ceased, and a second time a peal of bells summoned the company to another chamber, where a most elegant breakfast was served. As they took their seats, bouquets of fragrant flowers, each tied with the Funny ribbon, were presented to the ladies. I saw no more of Mr. Tandy, neither did I hear any longer his shrill voice. So I judged he had already departed. But a little

way off, I espied my friend Phil Blake, to whom I made signs that he should join me. This he did, and I told him that I needed his services, for that I had an affair with one Napper Tandy.

"I know the rascal," he answered, "and if you kill him, the country will be in your debt, and yet he shoots as though he were a gentleman and had been suckled on the Code."

"That pleases me right well," I returned, "for there is little sport in killing dead flesh."

"The fellow is no coward, albeit he is a braggart, but I have little hope that you will kill him," said he.

"And wherefore not?" I asked, with some heat.

"Since he was born to be hanged," he answered, laughing.

It was past eight o'clock in the morning when her Grace left Kildare Street to return to the Castle. She was in high spirits, as was but natural seeing that she had left no enemies behind her save, it may be, amongst the ladies.

"How have I pleased, Mr. Dillon?" she asked.

"The Earl of Charlemont is your friend," I answered.

“How can you know, for sure?”

“My lord is not used to hide his thoughts, and his eyes were not silent,” I returned.

“They will love me none the better for that.”

“They think your Grace more than mortal,” I said.

“Then I fear they would burn me for a witch.”

“Because you have vanquished them all in the dance and are not weary.”

“My eyes indeed are heavy, but my heart is light, for those who love me must serve my lord.”

So she gave me her hand to kiss and passed on to her own apartments.

That same night I was bidden to dinner with their Excellencies.

The Duchess was as gay and beautiful as ever I had seen her, and at this I marvelled much, thinking how that she had danced all night without ceasing and had left no rivals.

Mr. Godfrey Green, too, was of the party, but he seemed sad, so that his Excellency rallied him on his lack of wit.

“I am but a grasshopper,” he answered, “and

when the sun no longer shines on me, my dissolution is near," and he looked at the Duchess.

"Then, sir, you will become a bird of Paradise," her Grace answered, laughing.

"When he has made his peace with the Bishop of Derry," his Grace broke in.

"The grasshopper loves the sun, even when it shines no longer on him," Mr. Green returned, looking at her Grace.

"And so you would not be a bird of Paradise?" she said.

"And so I would die a grasshopper, thinking on the sun."

At this she smiled, seeming pleased. Then she turned to me.

"Mr. Dillon," she said, "to-night at midnight I set out to pay a visit of four and twenty hours to my Lady Delvin, and in truth I cannot tell whether Mr. Green or you be the gallanter cavalier, to go thither with me."

When she said this, I was lost in confusion, for I was promised to meet Mr. Napper Tandy, an hour after sunrise, at Clontarf, to exchange a brace of

pistols with him, and did I go with her Grace I knew that Mr. Tandy would trumpet me a coward through the town. So, thinking on this, I knew not what to answer.

"Have you taken a vow of silence, Mr. Dillon?" her Grace demanded, somewhat impatiently.

"It is a becoming habit, madam, for those who are slow of wit," I replied.

"But not for those who wear the Viceroy's colours," she said, haughtily, "and have a sword to give point to their speech."

"We spoke of the grasshopper," I said.

"Mr. Green has called himself a grasshopper," she returned.

"He will sing sweetly in the sunshine and so beguile your Grace's journey," I answered.

"But we travel at midnight," the Duchess broke out impatiently.

"Your Grace's smile is the grasshopper's sunshine," exclaimed Mr. Godfrey Green, rising to his feet and making her Excellency a low bow.

At this she smiled very graciously.

"If the journey is lightened by so pretty a wit,"



she answered, "we shall not travel in darkness. And so, Master Grasshopper, I beg your company, for in truth the owl is a dull fellow at best."

The jest stung me to answer her, albeit I did not heed the laughter that followed.

"And yet, madam," I said, with some heat, "there is none more faithful than he to watch over his mistress's honour in the darkness."

"There is no music in the owl," she returned, "yet the grasshopper gladdens the heart with his singing."

Then she turned from me, no longer seeming aware of my presence. My blood was hot that she should treat me so before them all, and because I could not tell her why it was I might not accompany her.

Indeed, my heart was so sore to think that her Grace had flouted me thus, that I could not forbear telling Phil Blake something of the matter, albeit I repented speedily, remembering how his tongue was wont to wag at times, but chiefly when the wine-cup made him careless of discretion.

So in the morning, while we made our way to Clontarf to meet Mr. Napper Tandy, I told him.

"'Tis a most foolish business," said he, "for Nap-

per Tandy shoots straight, for all his bragging tongue. But no man that serves a mistress need hope to find her grateful," and he sighed deeply and with a great appearance of melancholy, so that I had less belief in my own wisdom than before.

Now, that Mr. Napper Tandy shot straight was very true, for when we exchanged a brace of pistols, his second ball grazed my cheek, breaking the skin and drawing blood, but not much. And as for me, albeit I aimed low, as my wont was, and as my uncle had bidden me always to do, I did but shatter the stock of his pistol, leaving him still sound and with a whole skin. Yet for this he was not thankful, seeming more disheartened by the injury done to his fire-iron than if I had put a hole in his body.

"There is no gratefulness in the world," I said, watching Blake as he put my point-blankers into the case again, "for surely the pistol saved his life."

"'Tis not a human quality," he returned, without looking at me.

So, having made our bow, we left the field.

For many days after, her Grace treated me coldly and as though she had forgotten that I ever did her

a service. At this my Lord Duke seemed puzzled, as if he could not guess what had come between us. At times, I thought he was near asking me why it was that her Grace had changed towards me, and then he would speak of other matters.

One day it happened that I met the Viceroy as he was leaving her Grace's apartments. As soon as he saw me, he caught my arm, and before I could speak he had drawn me in and set me before the Duchess.

"See," he cried, "I have brought back your true knight to his duty."

"A recreant knight, I think it is," she answered, "seeing that he has failed in his duty."

"Nay, that he has never done, by my honour, I swear it, and so shall you, too, when you have heard." Then, while I stood silent and with my head bowed before her Grace, he told her all that I had done to shield her fair name, however he came to learn it.

"Is this indeed true, Mr. Dillon?" she asked, and her voice was very gentle, though her eyes were shining.

Then she gave me her hand. So I took it, kneeling, and raised it to my lips.

While I knelt, she struck me upon the shoulder lightly with her fan, crying out, "Faithfulest and truest of true knights, rise, Sir Theobald Dillon."

Then, drawing a ring from her finger, she gave it to me, bidding me keep it so long as I cared to remember that she was grateful, and that I had done her so signal a service.

Upon this, my Lord Duke was for making me a knight himself, but remembering how he had knighted the tailor when in his cups, I begged him to believe that I was better pleased to be her Grace's knight than to have an honour which I must share with others.

"Right gallantly said," cried the Duchess, seeming much pleased, "and I promise you that I will make no more knights, and of that let this be witness," and she broke her fan into two pieces.

"I know not if it be treason——" the Duke began.

"If it is, the Bishop of Derry will absolve you," her Grace returned.

"Be it so, then," he answered, laughing. "But let it not be known that you have refused the King's honour. Else I know not how it shall end."

So I promised that I would not speak of the matter.

But her Grace's ring I have worn ever since that day, nor ever needed it to remind me how grateful the Vice-Queen was for my service.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“FAREWELL TO LOVE.”

I WENT less often to my Lady Betty's house than heretofore; albeit, my cousin's kindness showed no lessening. Yet it was clear that to many whom I found there my presence was unwelcome. And this was not unnatural, seeing that they were the Viceroy's enemies and I was accounted one of his Grace's most faithful servants. Yet it puzzled me more and more to think why Donal should be so welcome to them.

Howbeit, I went no longer when my cousin received company, but only when I knew for certain that she was alone, or when she had summoned me.

Often her Grace inquired of me if I knew whither the beautiful Miss Yelverton had flown, but to her questions I could only answer that I did not.

“If she do not soon return, we must seek her out,” she said.

“If your Grace summon her, she will return.”

" 'Twould please me better that she came back without my asking."

" I think she loves your Grace."

" She shall have cause if only she care."

" Your Grace is generous."

" For I shall give her my own faithful knight to be her champion."

" She may choose another."

" That she shall not, for 'twould be treason."

" If she love him? "

" Your eyes are blind, or you would know.

" What, your Excellency? "

" That when you are by she sees no other."

" Ah, your Grace, I fear——"

" What, Sir Faintheart? "

" That your words are kinder than the truth."

" Make my words true, for you can."

" If your Grace will instruct me."

" That a woman's heart must be taken by assault, and that no sighing in secret can win it."

My own heart was hot at her Excellency's words, but, seeing that Miss Yelverton was still absent from

the city, I knew not how I should obey her Grace's instructions.

Some few days later a letter was brought, sealed with her Excellency's seal. I tore it open and read:

“The fair Yelverton is returned to the city.—
I. R.”

Marvelling much how she had come by the intelligence I made haste to Lady Betty's house, thinking that I might there find Miss Yelverton, or, if I did not, might learn of her. And in this I was not deceived, for there I found Miss Yelverton, and, as I had found her before, alone.

“You seek Lady Betty,” she said, smiling.

“Not Lady Betty,” I answered, “but Lady Betty's guest.”

She made me a courtesy.

“Lady Betty's guest thanks you for your civility. What news is in the city?”

“That Miss Yelverton has returned.”

“So soon?”

“Already.”

She became thoughtful a few moments, while I

stood wondering how I was to tell her what was in my heart.

“Is there no other news?” she asked again.

“None, I think, save that Mr. Dick Power was shot through the head at a meeting in the Nine Acres a se’nnight ago.”

“Is he dead?” she asked, and there was trouble in her voice.

I answered that he was, and that he had died as had many another gentleman as good as he, with his pistol in his hand, for her sorrow pleased me not over much.

“Do not be angry because I grieve for Dick Power,” she said, “for you, too, owe him much.”

“How much?”

“Your life.”

“I do not understand.”

Then she told me how that when she had learned of my quarrel with her father she had a great desire to know what manner of man I was, and when she had discovered where I was lodged, which she did without much difficulty, she had despatched her maid to inquire of me. And this her maid did of my

servant Barney, who in his story flattered me much. Hearing so favourable an account of me, she was not satisfied until she should see me for herself. And thus she had come, and on the way had pondered how she should save my life, if she was so minded after she had seen me.

When she had won my promise to fire dumb she sought Dick Power and bade him load her father's pistols blank. This at first he had refused to do, but afterwards consented. And at this part of her story she blushed, letting her eyes drop as though she knew not how to proceed.

"Because he loved you?" I said.

But she would not answer.

"I also love you!" I cried, catching her hand.

"Do you indeed love me?" she asked very softly, and her voice trembled a little.

"Better than all the world," I said, kissing her hand.

At this she drew back suddenly.

"Alas!" she said, sorrowfully, "'tis no time for love."

"Wherefore?" I asked, still holding her hand.

"Since the country is in danger."

"I see no danger."

"Since you are on the side of Mr. Pitt and the Viceroy."

"I am the Viceroy's servant, but I love my country."

"Even as I do?"

"Even as you do."

"Then why not—but there may be danger."

"If there be danger you need a protector the more," I said, remembering the Duchess's words.

"What protector?"

"Such a one as I."

"To bring ruin upon you."

"With you I am ready to face it."

"Alas! it must not be."

"Yet I love you."

"I cannot forbid you."

"And so?"

"We must meet no more——"

"No more!"

"No more alone."

"'Tis death to me," I burst out.

"The end of life to me," she returned, sadly.

"Then why ordain it so?"

"Since I am pledged."

"To a lover?"

"To my country."

"So are we all."

She sighed, but did not answer.

"When the pledge is fulfilled?" I said.

"Then there will be hope."

"Till then it is farewell to love."

"Farewell to love," she repeated, as though she were echoing a remembrance.

I drew her towards me, until her head fell on my shoulder.

"Love—love, farewell," I whispered, kissing her lips.

A quiver ran through her, and her eyes closed as though she were sleeping. Then suddenly she sprang from my arms.

"Go—go," she cried, "while I have strength to bid you go. Farewell to love."

"Farewell to love," I answered, and with a heavy heart I left her and went out into the street.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WOMAN'S HEART.

I HAD little hope to conceal my disappointment from such keen eyes as had her Grace. Still less did I dare to reveal to her anything of the cause of my rejection, seeing how loyal the Duchess was to the Viceroy, and how relentless against his enemies she was wont to be when she did not disdain them overmuch to be angry with them.

Neither could I any longer hide from myself the meaning of what I had witnessed at my cousin's house, when I remembered Miss Yelverton's words. That she and my Lady Betty too, maybe, were engaged in some plot against the Viceroy and the English power was like enough, and I had little doubt from what I had overheard, that my Lord Galtymore was at the head of it.

If the Viceroy had any suspicion of the matter he did not betray it, but still went his way as though he were surrounded by those who loved him and were

faithful to him. And if the people took heart to hoot him as he rode through the city he showed no anger, but when he returned to the Castle he would go to his stables and spend much time with his favourite horses, patting their necks and calling them by name; and this he did whenever he was disturbed, seeming to find great comfort from these faithful friends, as he was wont to call them. Yet this, too, when it became known, gave his enemies the occasion to abuse his Grace, declaring that Mr. Pitt had sent a jockey to govern the country that he might show his contempt for the Irish, as though it was a crime to love animals.

Of my meeting with Miss Yelverton, I said nothing, waiting until her Grace should speak of the matter. But as it happened, one of her Grace's ponies, the same that the Viceroy had but lately given her, fell very sick, and until it was better, her Grace could think of nothing else save how she might best cure it. This, too, gave me an occasion to be of service to the Duchess, for the pony had nothing more dangerous than a colic, and when I had given it a strong clyster became rapidly better, so that her

Grace was overjoyed, and could hardly find words enough to thank me.

I had meanwhile recovered my cheerfulness somewhat, and the future was grown more bright than it had appeared when I left my Lady Betty's house, having bidden farewell to love. Now I laughed at my own despair. Had I not won what I most desired, since I knew that she loved me. The thought of love made my heart leap. With her love I could face death. But it was not yet come to that. I might save her before she was more deeply involved in this unhappy conspiracy. At the worst her youth and beauty might protect her from extreme punishment were her share in the plot discovered.

I had some concern, too, for my Lady Betty, but not so much, seeing that she was prudent and cunning of fence. I felt, too, that she was but playing at conspiracy, and that it would go no further than having treason talked at her house and mysteries whispered at her routs. At length, when the Duchess asked if she had erred in thinking that Miss Yelverton was returned to the city, I was able to answer

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composedly enough that it was true, since I had been in her company.

"Then, sir, it was your duty to have thanked me for giving you so favourable an occasion," she said, with some warmth.

"Your Grace was so greatly disturbed," I began.

"'Tis true," she broke in, smiling; "but tell me, was the lady kind?"

"Kind, indeed, for so much goodness could not be else than kind."

"Did you make her pretty speeches?"

"I said farewell, your Grace."

"It is a strange word to woo with."

"I would have chosen another."

"I do not doubt it, but why farewell?"

"Since she would have it so."

"But you will return?"

"Alas! I know not."

"A rival?"

I bowed my head, for I could not tell her all.

"I could have sworn that she loved you, but it is a strange child."

"A woman's heart hides many secrets," I said.

"True, but there is one which it cannot hide."

"And that?"

"The secret of its love."

"From a man?"

"From a woman, and so I will find out who has dispossessed you, if dispossessed you be."

"To what end, madam?"

"Lest he be unworthy of her."

"I pray that he may not, your Grace."

"He shall not—here's my hand on it."

"Your Grace is a true friend," I said, kissing her fingers.

"So she will prove."

CHAPTER XX.

MY LORD BISHOP.

ALBEIT her Grace's words gave me some comfort, I was still much troubled, and not a little perplexed. Seeing that I was loyal to the King and to his Viceroy, it was my duty to discover what I could of this conspiracy against them, and yet I was as much concerned that the conspirators should be saved from punishment for their acts as I was lest they should succeed in their designs. Moreover, I had little love for Mr. Secretary Orde, whom I judged to be a cold, cautious man, who cared to call none his friend unless he might use him for his purposes, and it pleased me ill to think that he might one day—and that, perhaps, not very far distant—mount to power upon the ruin of those with whom my heart still was, albeit my reason was against them.

While I was occupied with these thoughts I was summoned to the presence of the Viceroy. His Grace held a paper in his hand, and there was a

heavy cloud on his brow, as though what was written therein had greatly displeased him.

“Your Grace is troubled?” I said.

“Aye, troubled indeed,” he answered, gloomily.

“Your Excellency’s enemies——” I began, but he interrupted me.

“Enemies!” he cried, and his eyes flashed. “What care I for enemies? Am I a coward that I should fear them? For them I am prepared—how well they shall yet know, and their knowledge shall cost them dear. But with a friend it is otherwise, for how shall a man fight against his friend and win the battle, seeing that his own heart is against him? But the King’s majesty shall be upheld, and I shall uphold it.”

I stood silent, not knowing what to answer. Then in a moment the Viceroy’s face grew bright, and he broke out into a laugh.

“Forget my words,” he said, “lest you think that I have stolen them from my Lord Chief Justice Clonmell. See how I have trusted you, for have I not shown you my heart?”

“It is sacred,” I answered.

“Yet it must be well guarded, since there are many traitors about me.”

“I am no traitor, your Excellency.”

“I do indeed believe it, and so I bid you go with all speed to the House of Commons and bid Mr. Attorney-General Fitzgibbon come to me without delay.”

I bowed and turned to leave, but when I had reached the door his Grace called me back.

“Speak no word of this to any one, not even to Mr. Orde, should he inquire.”

“Your Grace may rely on my discretion,” I replied, and went out.

I hastened to the House and delivered my message to the Attorney-General, who seemed somewhat surprised at so sudden a summons. As I was leaving, to my great amazement I saw before me, in the vestibule, my Lord Galtymore in converse with Mr. Orde. Neither were their words any more friendly than I could have expected.

“I seek not applause from the populace,” said Mr. Orde. “I want only to do the King’s business.”

My lord threw back his head, shaking his yellow hair on his shoulders.

"Is driving a nation to distraction," he cried out, angrily, "and forcing the most useful of her inhabitants out of the country, doing the King's business? If such is the business of the king of Ireland, it were better she had no king."

"No king! My lord, your words smell of treason."

The Earl burst into a harsh laugh.

"Treason, Mr. Secretary," he exclaimed, "is a word most often in the mouth of knaves; and if a man love his country his words do stink in the nostrils of them that would betray her." And with this he turned his back on Mr. Orde and left him.

Mr. Secretary Orde, with a smile on his face, stood watching my lord's retreating form. Then he caught sight of me, for I was loth that he should think that I avoided him, remembering the Duke's warning.

"A pretty playground, is it not?" he said.

"I did not come for play, but for business," I answered.

"Of his Excellency, the Viceroy?" he asked, eyeing me narrowly.

I bowed.

"We both serve the Viceroy," he said, coming closer to me.

"In different ways," I replied, coldly.

He smiled.

"True, sir, in different ways," he retorted. "And time alone can reveal which of the two ways is right."

"Mine is the straight way."

"Then beware of stone walls."

"I am used to them," I answered, remembering my native county.

"A side gate sometimes leads to salvation."

"More often to dishonour."

"Remember my words."

"They shall not be forgotten," I replied, leaving him.

As I returned to the Castle, I could not forbear smiling to think how ill-suited my Lord Galtymore was for a conspirator, seeing how he was wont to speak right out what was in his mind, in scorn of consequences. I reflected sadly how little chance of pardon he had, if the conspiracy were discovered, as I felt sure it soon would be, since he had made an

enemy of the Viceroy. Moreover, I trembled for the fate of her whom I loved, were my lord as indiscreet in all things as he had shown himself to Mr. Orde.

His Excellency was pacing up and down the council chamber when I entered.

“Where is Mr. Attorney-General?” he asked, impatiently; “have you not brought him with you?”

“He bade me tell your Grace that he would follow me without delay.”

“Then he spoke falsely, for he makes delay.”

“Is it your Grace’s wish that I should retire?”

“No, no; have I not said that I trust you? Wait in the ante-chamber, and when Mr. Attorney-General arrives, bid him enter.”

When he said this he returned to the council chamber. It was but a few minutes later when Mr. Fitzgibbon stood upon the threshold.

“His Excellency awaits you in the council chamber,” I said.

He bowed, and without a word entered the room where his Grace was and shut the door, while I withdrew as far as possible from them lest I should overhear their words, for I might not leave the ante-

chamber and disobey his Grace. But indeed it was not possible to close my ears to what they were saying, for they spoke loudly and with heat, and only an oaken wainscot was between us.

“On Friday se’nnight his lordship the Bishop of Derry will review the Derry Volunteers, and distribute amongst them one thousand caps of liberty. What do you make of it?” said his Grace.

“It is a grave matter.”

I remembered now the words which Mr. Green had spoken to me at Rathfarnham Castle, concerning the Bishop of Derry, and how I had made light of them.

For several moments I heard no more of what they were saying; then his Grace spoke out loudly. “Be it as you will, Mr. Attorney-General, and if the safety of this kingdom demands it, let them arrest his lordship. But let there be no blood.”

“No one is desirous of blood save only my lord bishop himself. Did not one of your Excellency’s servants hear him say to the Lord Charlemont ‘Things are going very well, my lord; depend on it we shall have blood, and that right soon’?”

“ Which of my servants has told you this? ”

“ Sir Boyle Roche.”

“ As arrant a knave as ever begged a peerage.”

“ But useful, your Grace.”

“ I tell you, Fitzgibbon, I am sick of them all, and I would fain rule without such creatures.”

“ It is not possible. Without their services, despicable as they are, the King's throne in Ireland would soon have another ruler.”

“ I fear that it is so, and look you here, if I might hazard a distant conjecture, I should say that without a union of the two parliaments, in twenty years this kingdom will have been separated from England.”

“ I desire no such remedy, your Grace,” Mr. Fitzgibbon answered, coldly.

“ I did but hazard the conjecture. For the present we are fully occupied. But see to this matter, and let nothing be done rashly. If it be necessary to take his lordship prisoner, let him be dealt with tenderly. This I command you to see to, and remember that not only I but Mr. Pitt loves his lordship of Derry as a father. I command you let there be no blood.”

“I shall not forget your Excellency’s commands,” the Attorney-General answered, bowing himself out.

His Grace seemed tired and his face worn, as if the matter had tried him sorely.

“When love and duty are at war, Mr. Dillon, it is hard to find peace,” he said.

“That it is, your Grace,” I answered, warmly.

“Ha! have you too found it so?”

“It is true that I have,” I answered.

“And you have made your choice between them.”

“I have made my choice.”

“I did right then to trust you in spite of—but no matter. We are both friends, and in trouble,” he said, and held out his hand to me.

“I am your Grace’s most faithful, humble servant,” I said, raising his hand to my lips.

CHAPTER XXI.

TREASON.

EVEN had I not been admitted in some measure to the confidence of the Viceroy, I could not long have remained in doubt that the kingdom was in grave danger. Scarce a day passed but the Lords Justices met his Grace in the council chamber, and albeit the Duke still preserved his air of careless gaiety, at times I could see that the troubles weighed heavily upon him. Moreover, he had earnestly entreated the Duchess to leave him and return to England, saying that Ireland was no place for her. But to this she replied very proudly that both her love and duty bade her stay with her lord, and most strongly when danger threatened. So his Grace kissed her hand, and swore that with such a wife even a craven might hold the kingdom against the enemies of the King. And after that he forbore to urge her Grace to leave him.

And that there was danger, none, not even the

most thoughtless, could doubt, seeing that every day there were riots in the streets of the city, men were tarred and feathered and set loose to make sport for the mob, and soldiers were found in lane-ways, and sometimes even in the most public streets, houghed and bleeding. New corps of volunteers were daily enrolled, and to them flocked every penniless adventurer who had a sword to sell to the highest bidder. Nay, the *Volunteer Journal* even urged the assassination of the Viceroy, and of those who remained faithful to him, declaring that in this way only could Ireland be freed from her oppressors. The failure of the silk trade helped to increase the number of these malcontents, since the weavers forgot that they had no greater friend for their tabinets than the Viceroy and the Vice-Queen, and it pleased them better to shout aloud their wrongs in the public street than to repair their losses by greater diligence.

The fury of the mob was not in itself of grave moment, and soon it would, I judged, have exhausted itself in shouting and in petty outrage, had there not been men of power and influence behind them. I found it hard to understand how so brave and so

honourable a gentleman as the Earl of Galtymore could lend his countenance to such acts, notwithstanding how greatly he hated the Duke of Rutland, and desired his disgrace or recall. Yet I feared more for my lord's safety than for the evil which he might do of himself. But with the Bishop of Derry it was otherwise, for his lordship had already stirred up much discontent amongst the more spirited of the Papists, declaring that they should have equal rights with the Protestants, and since he was an Englishman and a peer to boot, they trusted him and looked to him for deliverance. And yet he was no more discreet than was my Lord Galtymore, and so his designs were not hard to discover. This made me fearful for those who listened to his promises, and believed that, through his lordship, the kingdom of Ireland would be separated from England; since the bishop might save his head from the gallows, through the love of the Viceroy and Mr. Pitt, should he be found guilty of treason, but those who followed him could expect no such indulgence.

Moreover, because the Viceroy made merry with his friends, and when in his cups did strange things,

his enemies grew to despise his Grace as a man of no parts, but given up to indulgence, so that he was careless of what went on about him.

But in this they were grievously mistaken, since no man in Ireland understood the country better, and was better acquainted with their contrivances against him. So, since they believed his Grace to be ignorant, they were less cautious than if they feared him, and thus he was able the more effectually to foil their designs.

I was often fain to whisper a word of warning in the ears of those whom I loved, but honour and my duty to the Viceroy forbade it. So seeing I could do nothing to prevent the evil, I could only hope, by serving his Grace faithfully, to win some indulgence for those who were dearest to me, should they be brought to judgment for their folly. It was my custom, especially when my mind was troubled, to go to Daly's Club House and play a game with the cards, for I found in them much relaxation. So shaking off my depression, as well as might be, I turned my steps thither. There I found Phil Blake, who very readily consented to a game of Twenty-five.

The house was full, and it seemed to me that the faces of the guests were graver, and their talk less loud than usual; albeit this may have been only my own fears reflected. As Phil Blake shuffled the cards I spoke what was in my mind. "Aye, 'tis true enough," he answered, "for the Club House is become as grave as a church."

"Have you any thought why it should be so?" I asked, watching him narrowly.

"I do not think on the matter," he replied, carelessly.

"Yet you have marked the change."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It may be that I have, but my ears are shut, and so likewise is my mouth, so that if you desire information you must go to another to seek it, since prying into the affairs of others is a sorry business, and one little to my liking. The matter does not concern me."

"What if it concerns your friends?" I asked.

His brow coloured in an instant.

"I should do her—them little service by playing the talebearer."

I bit my lip in silence, for I could not mistake his meaning.

“Look you here, Theobald Dillon. I have no skill and less love for plotting, seeing that I am but a plain, blunt man, fond of the wine-cup and of the gaming table, as you know, and accustomed to solve difficulties with the sword rather than by my wits.”

He spoke in a low tone, and his face was graver than I had ever yet seen it.

“To save your friends——” I began.

“My life is at their service when they need it,” he broke in. “But think you the word of Phil Blake would have any power to turn them from their designs, whatever they may be? So I wait, seeing and hearing nothing. The knave wins.”

“Not so when hearts are against him,” I returned, taking the trick with the five. At length, seeing that Blake was becoming weary of my company, notwithstanding that he had won some fifteen guineas from me, I rose and left him. As I passed down the room I saw, to my great astonishment, my cousin Donal, seated at play with Bully Yelverton. So intent was he on his play that I thought to escape

his notice. But as I would have passed him he rose and made me a low bow.

“Sweet cousin, forgive my eyes that they have not reflected your image sooner.”

“If they had not done so at all, I could easily have forgiven them,” I replied, for his tone angered me.

“’Twould be disloyal to overlook the Viceroy’s friend,” he retorted, with a bow.

“I can claim no such high honour as his Grace’s friendship,” I said, haughtily. “But indeed I am the Viceroy’s humble and faithful servant, even as I hope you too are.”

He grew a shade paler, I thought, but went on in the same tone.

“You are too modest, cousin Theobald, in denying the Viceroy’s friendship, which so many crave to win. But so let me present you to Mr. Yelverton, the pattern of chivalry and the shrine of honour,” and he bowed with such apparent mockery that I could have struck him to the ground. “Believe me that Mr. Dillon is a man of courage and honour.”

“I need no such assurance,” the elder man replied, with much dignity, “since the young gentleman and

I have met before." Then making me a bow, as though he had no further need of my company, he turned again to the card table.

As I went from them, I caught a quick gleam of triumph and, I thought, of hate in my cousin's eyes. My old suspicion of him sprang to life anew, and I resolved to be watchful, yet I could not tell what danger he was preparing for me, nor how nearly he would succeed in compassing his designs.

CHAPTER XXII.

I MEET THE EARL OF GALTYSMORE.

I WAS much surprised to find my cousin Donal in the company of Mr. Yelverton, and I was mightily perplexed to account for their evident friendliness. If I read Donal's eyes aright, his scheme, whatever it might be, was prospering. Without knowing what it was, yet I had little doubt that I should have no share in his triumph.

I had no great love for Mr. Secretary Orde, "the pettifogging money scrivener from St. Mary Axe," as his enemies called him, and I judged that in Donal he had found a servant to his liking, since he was not one to be over-scrupulous where his own interest was at stake.

When I was near to the Parliament House, I met the Earl of Galtysmore. He saluted me coldly, and with an unsmiling face passed on. But I had gone scarce a dozen paces when he was by my side.

"It is not thus that one should greet a man who has been a friend," he said, holding out his hand.

"Who has been and is a friend, my lord," I answered.

He shook his head, smiling sadly.

"Then, methinks, the word has changed its meaning."

"It may have," I returned, warmly, "but I speak for myself."

"What do you tell me then?"

"That to-day I am as much your lordship's lover as I was on the night I did your bidding."

"For that I am still your debtor, and may yet repay. But I would your love, much as I prize it, were given not to me but to your country."

"My lord, I love my country, and serve her as best I know."

"I would teach you a better way if you had the will to learn," he answered, speaking low and with great earnestness. His face was pale and worn, and his eyes eager, so that pity forbade me to be wroth with him.

"It is useless, my lord," I said, calmly, "as useless

as 'twould be were I to implore you to believe that they who call themselves the friends of Ireland are her bitterest enemies. Your lordship has my love, but my faith belongs to my master."

"I thank you for your love, and again for the service you did to me and to my wife."

"I would do you another," I cried. "Oh! my lord, I implore you to turn back while there is yet time, not for your sake only, but for the sake of the Lady Galtymore."

His face grew paler, and his lips quivered, but he spoke with resolution.

"You know little of the Countess," he said. "Were I to become a backslider and to desert the cause of my country, which God forbid," and he raised his hat reverently, "then my wife would be the first to spurn me as a traitor."

"I pray that so gracious a lady fall into no danger."

"I thank you again, sir. And now, since I cannot persuade you, albeit I would purchase your help for more than a thousand guineas, I wish you as much good fortune as I may, seeing that you serve a different cause."

“And I too, my lord,” I answered, “wish to you and to the Lady Galtysmore all happiness and safety, and as much success as does not offend my duty.”

He swept off his hat and made me a low bow, his yellow hair falling thickly upon his shoulders.

“Sir,” he said, “your words redouble my regrets. But be it so while I still can say farewell.”

“Farewell,” I returned, and the echo of the word rang in my ears.

It had been in my mind to entreat the Earl to engage none else but men in his enterprise, seeing that dangerous projects were more meet for men than for women, but I judged it to be useless after that he had spoken of the Lady Galtysmore. For assuredly he would not be likely to show greater concern for the safety of Miss Yelverton than for that of his own wife.

I longed again to see Miss Yelverton, and beseech her to give up a cause which I knew to be hopeless and exceeding dangerous, but I was grown to understand women better than before, and so I knew that if one sought to keep them from danger, as little meet for their tender bodies, they grew the more resolute

to enter into it, even though love pleaded against it. So I judged it better to leave Miss Yelverton for a time to play with a man's weapons until she should bethink her that she was a woman.

There was another matter, also, which perplexed and troubled me not a little. Since I came to court I had been wont to receive, every month, a letter from my uncle Tony, in which those about him were mightily abused, according as the gout troubled him. Yet these letters were not wanting in signs of love for me, since my uncle was at much pains to give me good advice from his stock of somewhat old-fashioned wisdom. Thus I took it ill that my uncle should so suddenly grow careless of me, knowing that he was in good health, for so much I learned, but no more, from his man of business in the city.

I sought my Lady Betty, for she was always very clever to find out the causes of things which perplexed others, but she was left the city, nor could I learn whither she had gone nor when she would return. Indeed the servant answered my questions with so much sullenness and ill-will that I was greatly tempted to give him a lesson.

“The fellow has been playing with treason,” I thought, as I turned from the house, “and the Vice-roy’s badge displeases him. In a little while he will be happy to lick the dust from the shoe of the meanest of the King’s servants.”

If I could judge of the mistress by her servant, it seemed as though my lady’s prudence had deserted her.

I saw in the faces of the mob some confirmation of the fellow’s insolence, and if the people did not show me violence their bearing was but little removed from it. Without doubt the conspiracy was near its height.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BISHOP AND MONK.

I WAS now so deeply immersed in the business of the Viceroy that I had little leisure for the ordering of my own private affairs. St. Patrick's Ball was toward, and it was his Grace's desire that it should be conducted with greater splendour than ever before. To it had been bidden all the noblest and most powerful in the kingdom, whether they were friends or enemies. Seeing the names, I marvelled a little, for it was my custom, when my other duties permitted me, to help Mr. Hasler, the Court Chamberlain.

My lord bishop, too, had declared that he would journey from Derry to do honour to the patron saint of Ireland, and his Grace had ordered that a troop of dragoons should meet his lordship on the outskirts of the city and escort him to the Castle. I was amazed at so great an honour, and could think of no other reason for it, save that my lord bishop had shown greater prudence of late, and so the Viceroy

was grateful to him because he was still in possession of his see and not in one of the King's prisons.

"It is a great honour," I said to the chamberlain.

"It is indeed," he replied, "and yet another escort would be more to the liking of my lord bishop."

"What escort is that?"

"A troop of volunteers."

"His Grace thinks differently."

"And with good reason."

The tone of his voice opened my eyes, so that I wondered how I could have been so blind as not to understand.

"His Grace is very wise," I said, slowly.

"There are who accuse him only of folly."

"Because his Excellency is young."

"Since years cannot give wisdom to fools."

"They think laughter is the echo of an empty head."

"And that a solemn face hides the wisdom of Socrates," said Mr. Hasler, smiling, for it pleased him to be thought familiar with the ancients.

It was the custom of the Viceroy, on the night of St. Patrick's Ball, to dine alone with the Knights of

St. Patrick, yet now he bade a goodly company join them to do honour to the Bishop of Derry. On the morning of the Holy Day, we of his Grace's household received a secret command to wear serviceable swords rather than those more adapted to the dance, and to use both them and our wits if the occasion warranted. Never before had I seen so great a number of servants in the Castle, and amongst them I recognised many soldiers, despite their peaceful dress.

Shortly before the hour appointed the Viceroy and his court entered the ante-chamber of the banquet-hall. I do not think that I loved or admired his Grace so much before as I did then, for albeit matters of great moment were impending, his manner was free and careless, his jest as ready, and his smile as easy as when he was in the company of those only whom he loved and trusted.

He wore a coat of dark-green velvet, fresh from the loom, a waistcoat of light-green silk, handsomely embroidered with gold, black silk stockings, and shoes with large silver buckles forming the letter R and the ducal crown above it. In truth he played the king so nobly that one forgot, in looking at his hand-

some face and graceful figure, that he was no king but only the King's servant, as indeed each of us was.

The company was dressed according to the taste or fancy of each, and not a few, I judged, had disobeyed his Grace's command to wear nought else save Irish manufacture. But the effect was very brilliant and beautiful. My Lord Charlemont and Mr. Grattan were dressed in the uniform of the volunteers; my Lord Nugent wore a suit of light blue; my Lord Trimbleston was clad in scarlet, with full-powdered wig, while the Lord Taaffee tottered in dove-coloured silk to kiss his Excellency's hand. Mr. Daley, the actor, presented himself with stockings rolled over his knees, long flaps to his waistcoat, and very large cuffs, while Mr. Geminiani, the musician, had attired himself in blue velvet, richly embroidered with gold.

The appearance of my cousin Donal filled me with amazement. He had been wont to dress, richly indeed, but soberly, in garments of somewhat sombre hue. Now I beheld him in light-green silk and cream-coloured waistcoat, richly embroidered with shamrocks in gold. The Knights of St. Patrick wore

the badges of the order, as did the Viceroy likewise, and all the company carried bunches of shamrock fastened to the left breast.

As time went on I thought I saw his Grace's eye wander from the company, as though he listened no longer to their words, and a shade of anxiety would hover for a moment on his brow, for the hour of the banquet was nigh, and my Lord Bishop of Derry was not arrived.

"Seeing that so many good men wait for the dinner," whispered Mr. Green in my ear, "why should the dinner wait for one man—even my lord bishop? There is no justice in it."

"The dinner was made for man," I returned, "not man for the dinner."

"Then a curse upon the head of him who would spoil that which is made for delight."

"My lord bishop is no laggard," I said. "Hark to the sound of his coming."

We heard the note of a bugle, followed by the trampling of horses. A few moments later Frederick Augustus, Lord Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol, entered the chamber. As he approached the Viceroy

the company drew back with bent heads to give his lordship room. He was robed entirely in purple; the shoe-buckles and those at his knee sparkled with diamonds; gems glittered on his delicate white fingers. In his left hand he held negligently white gloves with gold fringe and tassels. In truth he seemed more like an emperor and a ruler of men than the lord of an invisible kingdom.

When he reached the place where the Viceroy stood he bent his knee and kissed his Excellency's hand. Then his Grace raised him up and, himself kneeling, lifted my lord bishop's hand, and, with all reverence, kissed the episcopal ring, and the sight was as pretty a one as ever I saw.

As his Grace rose a murmur ran through the company, and many heads were bowed as low and as reverently as they had been to my lord bishop.

A tall, gaunt man, with a lean vigil-worn face, approached his Excellency. He was dressed in sad-coloured brown garments, with white stock and powdered wig. As he knelt to kiss the Viceroy's hand a murmur of applause and veneration filled the chamber, for the chaplain of the Irish Brigade, the

eloquent Capuchin friar, the great Romanist priest, Father Arthur O'Leary, was no less powerful and still more beloved than his lordship of Derry.

A strange smile passed over the Viceroy's face as the priest knelt meekly before him.

"Look at the priest," whispered Mr. Green, "he would show my lord bishop how to be a Christian."

"He is very meek," I returned.

"More than human, and so I have no faith in him."

"Since he is a papist priest and calls you heretic."

"The name does not displease me. 'Tis only my stomach calls aloud for justice."

"It shall quickly be done," I replied, smiling, for at the moment a flourish of trumpets summoned the company to the banquet-hall.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BANQUET.

ON the right of the Viceroy sat my lord bishop, on the left the Earl of Charlemont, while on my Lord Charlemont's left sat the Capuchin friar. I could not understand why so much honour should be shown to a Romanist priest, and this I said to Mr. Green, who was seated opposite to me.

"His Grace is indeed between two fires," he returned; "if he escape the bishop he will fall into the hands of the priest."

"Incidis in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charybdin."

"My Latin is stale," he retorted, frowning, "and I would have you speak honest English, as a loyal man should."

"I think the bishop is safer than the priest."

"Not so, since my lord bishop offers his Grace the torments of hell, while the priest promises the comforts of purgatory. Which, think you, will his Excellency choose?"

"I think that he will refuse both as long as he may," I answered, laughing.

"There you are wrong; for though his Grace would go to hell for a pretty woman, he will go to purgatory for no priest, however entertaining. What think you?"

"I allow my thoughts no such license," I replied, for the subject was little to my liking.

Outside, in the upper Castle yard, I could hear the champing of bits and the creaking of harness. Now and again the horses pawed the ground and snorted impatiently. My Lord Bishop of Derry's escort still waited. "Truly," I thought, "his Excellency is very wise."

I turned to look at the Viceroy. His face was calm and his smile very sweet. He was speaking, and I listened to his words.

"The Catholics are our true and loyal subjects, and we love them much. The King's Majesty——" and he bowed his head, "has nothing to fear, but everything to hope from his Catholic subjects. Is it not true, father?"

“It is very true, your Excellency, since loyalty is an article of their faith,” the friar returned.

“Yet we have heard of those amongst them who are not loyal,” exclaimed Sir Hercules Langrishe.

“It is true that some of our flock have been corrupted by intercourse with evilly disposed persons, not of their faith,” and the priest raised his meek eyes till they rested a moment on the bishop’s face.

“I would gather them all into one fold,” said his lordship, “and love of Ireland should be the first article of their faith.”

“’Twould indeed be difficult to accomplish,” broke in the Lord Nugent, with a smile.

“That may be, my lord,” answered the bishop, looking at him with no friendly eye, “but yet not so difficult seeing that many declare that your lordship is a papist and will die with a wafer in your mouth.”

His lordship grew a little pale, but quickly answered, wittily enough—

“Depend upon it, my lord bishop, that is the very last thing that I shall do.”

What the bishop might have answered I know not,

for suddenly, from without, there came a sound deep and low at first, but swelling into a loud cry of rage and fury. Many hands sought their sword-hilts, and not a few stood up to repel danger if it threatened. But the Viceroy rose, with a calm smile on his face.

“Be not disturbed, my lords and gentlemen, ’tis only the cry of my children, who would remind me of my promise to them.”

Then his Grace turned to the hussar, who attended him as groom of the person, the same gallant German who had saved his father the Marquis of Granby’s life at the battle of Hastenbec, and who on all important occasions stood behind his Grace’s chair, and whispered a word in his ear.

In a little while the cries of anger were changed to shouts of joy, for by his Excellency’s orders, the fountain in the lower Castle yard, where the people were assembled, had begun to flow with claret.

It was now near the hour when the Viceroy should open the ball, and albeit there were those who would fain have remained longer over their wine, yet many were impatient for the dance and for the ladies’ pres-

ence. They were glad, therefore, when his Excellency rose, and, turning to the Bishop of Derry, said:

“Come, my lord, and see how my children love me.”

My lord bishop rose with an uneasy smile, and followed his Grace to the window. The light from the banquet-hall fell upon the scarlet coats of the dragoons sitting silently in their saddles with their sabres drawn. Down below the crowd surged about the fountain, a black and turbulent mass.

“Give the Irish enough to drink,” whispered Mr. Green in my ear, “and they will be a pattern of loyalty to all nations. The King has no truer servant than a butt of claret.”

Indeed, it seemed as though he had spoken truly, for the mob no longer cursed the Viceroy, but when they had found their breath shouted, “Long life to his Excellency,” and other things to the same purpose.

“Hearken how my children love me,” said his Grace.

“The cries of the mob have often been misinterpreted, your Excellency,” answered the bishop.

“So they have,” returned the Viceroy, “and I would set little store by them. Listen how they shout their loyalty, lest any should doubt it.”

“They do indeed shout loudly,” responded the Lord Bishop of Derry.

CHAPTER XXV.

ST. PATRICK'S BALL.

NEVER had I seen before so large and so brilliant a company as thronged the ball-room. Indeed I know not if any court in Europe could have excelled that of the Viceroy in wit and beauty, even though it might in wealth and magnificence. Not many of the nobles were rich, yet most of them spent all that they had, and some even more, lest they should appear to cut but a sorry figure by the side of his Grace.

So it was that the enemies of the Viceroy were wont to declare that his Excellency was bent on ruining the Irish nobles, so that he might find them the more ready to take bribes for betraying their country. But although they said this, they did most faithfully follow the Viceroy's example in the spending of money, and were secretly proud, while they blamed his Grace, that there never was so splendid a metropolis in so poor a country.

I could not help thinking of Mr. Green's remarks after that he had been splendidly entertained by my Lord Clanricarde. "While I drank his lordship's wine, I fell to watching the servant who filled my glass, and wondered if he were a bailiff disguised in livery."

As I gazed upon the scene, I well nigh forgot the danger that underlay this mask of pleasure, and that anger, and hatred, and hope perchance too, it was that flushed the cheek and made the eye to glitter. Unless one looked deeper, one could discern, in the faces of the guests, naught save loyalty and the joy of testifying to it.

The Viceroy was attended by the Knights of St. Patrick, wearing their collars of SS. her Grace, the Vice-Queen, by her ladies-in-waiting. Above the throne waved the flags of England and Ireland. Her Grace wore light-green silk, with many diamonds. In her bosom she carried a bunch of shamrocks with a white rose in the centre. If she had any inkling of trouble, she betrayed none of it, for her face was smiling and her eyes bright, as though she found much pleasure in the homage of the company. All

the ladies likewise wore the shamrock, and some, too, a rose for their loyalty to the King's Majesty.

The Battle Axe Hall was fitted up for a cotillon room, an orchestra being raised for the music, while the drawing-rooms, which communicated therewith, were laid out for cards.

St. Patrick's Hall was for the country dances, and was the general rendezvous of the company.

As soon as the Viceroy and the Vice-Queen had taken their seats, the ball began.

It had been his Grace's custom to leave the throne as soon as possible, and make a circuit of the rooms, conversing in the most familiar manner with the ladies. But now he remained and a number of his friends stayed by him.

In truth, I was in no mood for dancing, even had not my mind been occupied with graver matters. The mask of loyalty, which many that I knew to be enemies of the King's Deputy wore so easily, gave me greater concern than if their faces had shown a frown rather than a smile.

It was my duty to pass frequently through the different chambers and note what was taking place,

lest many of the Duke's enemies should collect together, and prevent it if need be.

There were but few at the card-tables, but at one, in a dark corner, I espied the yellow flowing hair of the Earl of Galtymore. His companion's face I could not see, for his back was towards me. Now, albeit my soul abhorred the business of a spy, and that, too, against a man that I loved, yet so great seemed the Viceroy's danger, that I could only remember my duty. If the plot is foiled, I thought, before any evil is done, my Lord Duke may be merciful, and I had great reason to merit, by my services, an indulgence for her whom I loved, seeing that she, too, was amongst his Grace's enemies and in danger of death.

Cautiously I drew a little nearer so that I could discern who it was that played with my lord. It was Mr. Napper Tandy, him whom I had met a little while before at Clontarf, and blazed at for his words against the Duchess.

Both conversed very earnestly, and the cards lay idly upon the table. My lord's face was stern, and his eyes heavy. His brow was lined with trouble.

so that my heart was sorry for him, traitor though he was.

I did not hear what they spoke, nor did I seek to discover their plans, for I would do no more in the business than what honour required of me.

So I withdrew softly, and bidding one of the household watch my lord, I returned to St. Patrick's Hall.

The crowd at the entrance was very great, so that I was forced to wait until the dance was over. As soon as it was, I pushed my way through the crowd. A few paces from me I saw the Earl of Charlemont, and beside him stood Miss Yelverton. The sight smote my heart like a dagger. Why had she come hither to make my duty more painful, my struggle for honour more costly? As if to mock my grief she appeared more beautiful than ever I had seen her. Her tall, slender figure was clad all in white, and she wore no ornaments, save a bunch of shamrocks at her neck and a red rose at her girdle.

"The chief of the volunteers has still an eye for beauty," said a voice beside me, "and by my faith, it is so pretty a traitress, that if my honour allowed, it would please me well to be at her feet."

I turned and looked at Sir Hercules Langrishe.

"It might not please her so well," I retorted.

"Since she is a traitress?"

"Since she is a woman."

"You know her secret, then?"

"What secret, Sir Hercules?"

"What but the secret of her heart?"

"I do not understand!"

"Then, my friend, why answer for a woman?"

"I spoke for women generally," I returned, seeing that it was well not to be angry; "and as Sir Hercules Langrishe knows as well as any man, the sex is wont to be capricious."

"True, true that I should know well," he answered, smiling, as though he found something pleasant in my words.

As soon as I could, I shook myself free of Sir Hercules and sought Miss Yelverton.

As I bowed before her, her face grew very pale, and I thought that she trembled. My Lord Charlemont drew back, with a look of surprise on his face.

"I would fain ask you a question," I said, in a low voice.

"I am at my lord's service," she returned, with a faint smile, as though she would recall her old spirit.

"But it must be brief."

"As brief as my lady desires," I said.

She made a courtesy to my Lord Charlemont.

"Speak now," she said.

"Not here," I replied, "since it concerns but me, and I would not be overheard."

She hesitated a moment, looking down at her girdle. "There is still time," she murmured; "be it so. I cannot refuse you."

Then she laid her hand on my arm and I led her from the hall and through the drawing-room to an alcove, where there should be no witnesses. She did not speak, and for some moments I stood silent, looking down at her bent head. The murmur of voices came from the ball-room, seeming far off. I bowed my head and kissed her hair.

"May love return?" I whispered.

"Alas, no!"

"To save you?"

"It is impossible!"

"My arms are strong," I said, holding her fast

so that her bosom heaved and fell upon my breast; “and my heart and sword are yours to save you.”

She clasped her hands, looking up into my face like a suppliant.

“Spare me!” she cried, in a low voice, “and be merciful to a woman who is weak, also, because she loves you. What you ask is impossible. Love and I have said farewell forever. Whether we win or lose, and God defend the right, though a woman’s heart bleed for it, fate has parted us forever, forever, ah, forever.”

“It shall not part us, by God it shall not!” I cried, holding her fast against my heart.

She threw her arms about my neck, turning her trembling lips to mine.

“Kiss me, Theobald, kiss me, as though this was our wedding day; let me feel for this moment that my body and soul are yours before I go out into the darkness.”

The rebellious blood mounted to my brain. I lifted her in my arms, crushing her with my passion and bruising her sweet lips with kisses. It was in my mind to carry her hence, set her upon my horse,

and ride I knew not where, nor cared, so that I could save her. For the moment I remembered naught of honour or of duty, but only love, and the desire of it.

But suddenly she flung herself free from my arms.

"Now it is past," she said, with a calmness that amazed me. "I have said farewell, a last farewell to love."

"It shall not be!" I cried, catching her hand. "I will defend you against all the world, against death!"

"But not against myself!" she answered, smiling sadly; "and not against worse than death—regret. Farewell!"

I sought to hold her back, but she would not.

"Remain here awhile," she said. "I will return alone," and in an instant she was gone.

As I passed through the drawing-room, I noticed that my Lord Galtymore was no longer there. Suddenly the remembrance of my duty and of his Excellency's command came back to me. I hastened to St. Patrick's Hall. As I reached it the music ceased and the dancers were returning, some to one end, some to the other of the chamber.

Facing the Viceroy, near the door, stood the Earl

of Galtymore, with a group of gentlemen about him. Midway on the left, but near the wall, stood my Lord Bishop of Derry, smiling, but, I thought, ill at ease.

I heard a murmur from those about me, and looking saw Miss Yelverton advance into the middle of the open space before the Viceroy; then taking the red rose from her girdle, and tearing it in pieces, she flung it upon the floor. In an instant there was a commotion; many hurrying to the side of the Viceroy, and others taking their stand by the Earl of Galtymore, but those about the Viceroy were many more in number, while some lingered doubtfully between the two parties.

On this the Viceroy rose from the throne, and taking her Grace's hand, led her some distance towards the middle of the hall. There he halted, and bowing to my Lord Galtymore, he said, smiling all the while—

“Her Excellency would fain dance with so loyal and faithful a servant of the King's Most Excellent Majesty as the Right Honourable the Earl of Galtymore.”

Beads of perspiration stood upon my lord's fore-

head, and for a moment he seemed as though he knew not what to do. Then he came forward with bowed head.

“Her Excellency does me too much honour,” he said, hoarsely. “Yet of my loyalty to worth and beauty her Grace may make trial when she will.”

“Of that she is abundantly satisfied,” replied her Grace, with a courtesy, laying her hand on the Earl’s arm, while his followers seemed as though they were struck dumb with confusion and consternation.

Then his Grace turned to Miss Yelverton, who stood looking like one in a dream, and begged that she would honour him. She bowed her head, not, I think, knowing what he said; and so the Earl of Galtymore with the Duchess of Rutland, and his Excellency, the Viceroy, with Miss Yelverton, began the dance.

The Earl of Galtymore’s plot had been betrayed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TREACHERY !

THERE was great consternation in the city when it was learned that the plot to seize the Viceroy and his household had miscarried. The streets, indeed, were filled with soldiers, and it was suspected that the volunteers had done much to render the mob more turbulent. But for the time at least the dangerous amongst them were cowed and feared to show themselves openly, being ignorant how far the plot had been discovered.

There were many who blamed the Viceroy because he had not instantly seized his enemies and sent them to prison, but albeit the Lords Justices of the Kingdom urged this most strongly, his Grace would not hear of it.

“What,” he cried, “shall we disgrace the hospitality of our court by making prisoners of them whom we have bidden as guests? Fie on it, my lords. As

long as Rutland remembers his honour and the honour of the King, his master, such things shall not be done in his name. Nay, rather his guests, whatsoever their purpose, shall be treated as friends and loyal subjects so long as may be. Let them have a se'nnight's grace and then proceed with your warrants in the King's name."

There were many too who suspected his Grace's reason for this indulgence; but I only thought of it that I might save those I loved from the consequences of their folly. So the favour of his Excellency was sweet to me.

"I believe that you are my true and faithful friend whatever they may say against you," he said.

"Indeed, your Grace," I answered, with some heat, "I knew not that I had enemies; but if they have spoken against my loyalty, they have lied, and so I would tell them did they dare speak openly."

"Tut, tut," he cried. "Why, you are still but a boy. A man would be proud to make enemies so long as he did the King's service. Albeit, it is sweeter to make friends. Have I not found enemies where I hoped for friends?"

“When your Excellency calls me friend, I care not what my enemies may say.”

“You are my good and true friend,” his Grace answered, giving me his hand, “and that the Viceroy is not ungrateful you shall prove, if need be, provided always that it be not against the King’s interests.”

It was in my mind to prove it, for in truth I had but one desire, and that to save Miss Yelverton. My heart was aflame and my blood riotous for love, so that the delay was torture to me. My duty no longer stood in my way, for I had served the Viceroy faithfully, as he had confessed.

How deep Miss Yelverton had been in the plot I knew not, but if her life was forfeit as the penalty of her treason, then her youth and beauty would plead eloquently for pardon. And if they failed, I would throw myself at the feet of the Duchess and entreat her Grace to give her to me as she had promised.

When I reached my chamber, I found there a letter. I tore it open hastily. In it was written,

“ A friend of Mr. Theobald Dillon desires to return a favour. He waits at the Essex Bridge.”

There was no name to it, and this filled me with suspicion. I summoned my servant and inquired who had brought the letter. But of this he could tell me nothing, nor could any of the servants, and I had no reason to doubt that they spoke truly. I hesitated but a moment. Then placing a couple of pistols in my belt and throwing about me a heavy cloak, so as to disguise myself as well as might be, I left the Castle and hurried to the Essex Bridge.

Cavalry still patrolled the streets, and the city was quiet when I reached the bridge. I scanned the faces of the people, anxiously seeking my unknown friend. A hand touched my arm. I turned round.

“ Sir Harry MacCabe,” I exclaimed, looking into his face.

“ At your service,” he answered, bowing.

“ You would speak with me?”

“ That I would, but not here, since stone bridges, as well as wooden walls, have ears. Pray follow me, but remain a few paces behind.”

I did as he bade me and followed him, wondering

the while what his business was, and little suspecting the service which he would render me.

Leaving the bridge, he turned down the south bank of the river, striding along so rapidly that I had some ado to keep pace with him. When he had gone about half-a-mile, he left the river and plunged into a dark and narrow lane, halting at length before a dingy-looking hostel, over which hung a weather-beaten sign-board, with a faded mitre painted upon it. When I had joined him he entered, beckoning me to follow, and led the way to a private chamber.

Indeed, he seemed to be a person of no small importance to judge by the respect which the landlord showed to him, calling him "Sir Harry" very often, as though it tasted sweet in the mouth. He cried for a quart of wine, and when it was brought he bade the host see that we were not interrupted.

"They will suspect our business the less when we drink wine," said Sir Harry when we were alone. "My host is an honest fellow enough, but he is an innkeeper, and would fain be a keeper of secrets. But while we drink his wine, he will leave us at peace."

Then he poured out two goblets of wine and, raising one to his lips, exclaimed, "To his Excellency, and may he be saved from his enemies!"

"'Tis a toast that no loyal man can refuse," I said, and drank the wine.

I was impatient to learn Sir Harry's business with me, and, indeed, he did not make much delay.

"The enemies of the Viceroy, whom God preserve, since he has brought wealth and trade to the city, conspired together to seize his Excellency and his household on St. Patrick's night," Sir Harry began, speaking slowly.

"To what end?"

"That they might set up an independent republic in Ireland and drive out all that were loyal to the King."

"Who was at the head of it?"

"The Earl of Galtymore, and he or the Lord Bishop of Derry was to be the first president.

"A very pretty plot," I said.

"It was betrayed," he went on, eyeing me narrowly.

"So it was."

“The plans of the conspirators and the names of those suspected were revealed to the Viceroy.”

“So it has always happened.”

“And the name of Theobald Dillon, Esq., extra aide-de-camp to his Excellency, was amongst them.”

I leaped to my feet in anger and amazement.

“Impossible!” I cried. “His Grace has no more faithful servant.”

“Of that I have no doubt; yet what I speak is true.”

“Tell me the name of the traitor, and by God he shall answer the calumny with his life!”

“Hush, you will be overheard. The name of the gentleman who has revealed these things to his Grace is Donal O’Brien, secretary to Mr. Orde.”

I sank back into my seat, striving to conceal my shame from the man who called himself my friend, and who, indeed, seemed to be such. I lifted my head again.

“It may be false,” I exclaimed. “How do you know this that you have told me?”

“With my own ears I have heard it. While I was at the Castle, repairing the wainscot, I heard

voices, and one of them spoke your name. Then, since I owed you a service and had a kindness for you, I listened, so that I might warn you if danger threatened. Mr. O'Brien revealed all the plans of the conspirators to the Viceroy, and declared that you, too, were a traitor."

"Did his Excellency believe this of me?"

"Of that I know nothing."

"Sir Harry," I said, rising and grasping his hand, "I am in some danger, but with God's help and yours I shall yet confound my enemies. I thank you most heartily for your service, which I hope I shall live to repay."

"Sir," he returned, very proudly, "I have been paid, since you did me the first service, which I have not forgotten. No one can say that Harry MacCabe forgets a friend or——" he added, with a smile, "an enemy."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A TRAITOR.

I WAS so filled with anger against Donal and alarm for the safety of Miss Yelverton, that I had no leisure to think of my own danger nor how I might repel it. Indeed, if I could not save her, then the worst evil was befallen me, and I cared little, even for vengeance against those who would destroy me.

It added to my concern to remember how I had seen Donal and Mr. Yelverton together at the club house, and with what friendliness they had seemed to converse. And thinking on that I bethought me also that I had not seen my cousin at the ball, nor, indeed, after the banquet.

I saw that there was little time to be lost, since the Viceroy's clemency would last but for a se'nnight, and already I knew that Mr. Attorney-General had in his hands a list of the names of the chief con-

spirators. At the worst, flight and banishment were better than a shameful death or long imprisonment.

I despatched my servant to Mr. Yelverton's house in the city, to inquire secretly if Miss Yelverton were still there, but he returned, saying that so far as he could learn the house was uninhabited, not as much as a servant having been left in it. At this I was filled with alarm lest Mr. Yelverton and his daughter were fled from the country and I should never see her again.

In my distress I remembered my cousin, Lady Betty, for if she could not, then I knew none else that could help me. So as soon as my duties to his Grace allowed me, I made haste to wait upon her.

The same fellow who had a few days before behaved with so much insolence towards me threw open the door for me. I noted that when he beheld who I was that his face betrayed the liveliest apprehension. With great obsequiousness, as though he would put himself under my feet, he begged me to enter. If my lordship would be pleased to wait, her ladyship should be instantly informed of my presence. I could not forbear to smile at the fellow's servile

manner, since he knew as well as I that I was no lord, but only a plain gentleman, albeit I was in the service of the King's Deputy.

Indeed, I had not to wait long, for in a little while my cousin entered. She no longer wore bright garments as she had been wont, but was dressed all in black. Her face was pale, and her eyes seemed weary. Neither in them nor on her lips was any sign of welcome.

I took her hand and pressed it to my lips, and she suffered it negligently.

"Do you come on the Viceroy's business?" she asked, coldly, when I had released her hand.

"I come to see my cousin Betty," I answered.

"Your cousin is mightily honoured," she returned, making me a courtesy, "that you have remembered that she is still alive."

"I am not wont to forget those that I love."

She looked into my face a moment and then broke out, laughing bitterly—

"You have a man's memory," she said, "and you remember when it is expedient. Tell me what would you have of me?"

“I would know first if you are well and happy.”

“I thank you, my health is very good.”

“And you are happy?”

Her eyes blazed angrily.

“What right have you to ask? but I will tell you. Yes, I am as happy as a woman deserves to be. Yet methinks they might have taught you better manners at the court than that you should seek to pry into a woman’s secrets.”

“I am grieved to hear you speak so, for your happiness is dear to me. Yet the time is not so far gone when my Lady Betty had kinder words for her cousin Theobald Dillon.”

“When he deserved them.”

“He has tried to merit them,” and I looked into her eyes. Her gaze fell, and a blush mantled in her cheeks.

“It is true,” she said, more gently, “that once you did me a service.”

“And would do you many, if need were and the opportunity served.”

“Then speak right out, for my heart is sick of crooked words and deceit and treachery.”

“I would fain seek your help.”

“Ah, now you are honest, for I knew that it was not for my poor sake you were come,” and she smiled a little sadly. “But since I owe you a service, I will repay as far as it is in the power of a poor, weak woman to help one so highly favoured. Tell me, for what purpose do you need my help?”

“To save a beautiful woman.”

“There are many beautiful women needing salvation.”

“Ah, but not so beautiful nor so good as she,” I cried out, remembering only my love and taking no thought of discretion.

My cousin's face grew cold again, so that I saw my folly in speaking of one beautiful woman to another.

“Who is this wonderful creature that you speak of? Surely so much beauty and goodness will protect her without my poor aid.”

“She is your own friend,” I said, seeking to repair my error.

“I recognise none such among my friends, who are all of them mere mortals. Tell me her name.”

“Beatrix Yelverton.”

“Ah!”

She turned her head from me, so that I could not tell if she were pleased or angry.

“And you would save her?” she asked, after a while.

“With my life.”

“To what end?”

“Since I love her.”

“And would have her for your wife?”

“That is my resolve.”

“It is impossible.”

“Impossible!”

“My poor Theobald, if you really love her, then I grieve for you exceedingly. But you will in a little while forget her, for there are many beautiful women at the court.”

“I am resolved to marry her,” I said.

“If she loves another?”

“It is false, she does not. Who dares say that she does?”

“I know not. But this I know—she is already promised.”

"Promised!" I cried out, and for a moment my brain reeled.

"Alas, Theo, it is so."

"Then the promise shall not be fulfilled while I live."

"You are a good lover, but I fear it is impossible to help you."

"To whom have they betrothed her?"

She hesitated a moment, scanning my face anxiously.

"Do not be afraid. Tell me his name."

"Donal O'Brien."

I sank back into a chair, too much overwhelmed to speak. It was all plain to me now. Donal had triumphed again, to my discomfiture. But he should not in this matter if I lived. I sprang to my feet.

"Did you witness this infamous compact?"

"I am not her father."

"Then I tell you that were he a thousand times my kinsman, he shall not have her. There is treachery in this, and I shall reveal it. Listen, Betty, and breathe no word of it until I give you permission. Donal has betrayed you to the Viceroy."

Her face grew very pale.

"Betrayed!" she exclaimed. "Then we are lost."

"I will save you if you will help me."

She bent her head.

"I must see Miss Yelverton."

"She has left the city," she murmured.

"But not the country?"

"No, not the country, since Donal——"

"No more of Donal," I broke out. "How can I send a message to her?"

She pointed to a table upon which were pens and paper.

"Write what you will, and within two hours she shall have your message. That much I can promise you."

I sat down and wrote, begging Miss Yelverton to name a place where I could meet her in secret and without delay, since the matter was urgent. When I had sealed the letter, I turned to my cousin.

"Shall I come here for the reply, if any there be?" I asked.

"'Twill be better that I send the reply to you, either to the Castle or to some other place."

“Be it so, then,” I answered; “send the message to the Mitre tavern in Raven Court, on the south bank of the river.”

“It shall be as you desire,” she said, raising her head and looking at me. I saw that her eyes were soft and full of tears. I took her hand and kissed it.

“You are my true friend, and I shall not prove ungrateful, whether I succeed or—but I shall not fail.”

“I wish you success, but I do not hope for it.”

“My love is strong enough to merit it.”

She looked at me strangely.

“Love, love,” she murmured, “’tis better than fortune, more precious than beauty, if one could keep it.”

I kissed her hand again and turned to leave her. As I did so, I heard a heavy step ascending the stairs. My Lady Betty grew suddenly white, and I thought that she trembled.

“Fly, fly,” she gasped.

But there was no time for flight, even had it been possible, for already upon the threshold of the cham-

ber stood my uncle Tony. He leaned heavily upon a stick, and his breath was laboured.

“My dear uncle,” I exclaimed, going towards him. But he waved me off, and his eyes, under his heavy brows, were aflame with anger.

“Uncle me no uncles,” he cried, furiously. “I have cast you off. Your name is blotted out.”

Thunderstruck, I drew back, for I knew not what to say. My Lady Betty stood beside me with bent head, as though my uncle’s wrath were directed against her also. When he had recovered breath, he went on again, with less passion but with an intensity of hatred that almost froze my blood.

“A curse is on your name, and the shame of it shall last forever. You have tarnished the honour of a spotless ancestry, you who were suckled on pride and trained in the ways of a gentleman, you whom I loved as a son——”

His voice trembled a little, but the anger in his eyes did not abate.

“Into whose keeping I entrusted the honour of a spotless name. You have betrayed the trust, and may God punish you.”

His words seemed to choke him. He struggled for breath, and then fell prone on his face before me.

Lady Betty threw herself upon her knees beside him and raised his head.

"My God, you have killed him," she cried.

"It is not I," I answered, almost beside myself, "but he who has lied against me."

"Go, go," she said, for I would fain have helped her. "I pray that he will live, for if he die, then Donal is his heir."

"I pray that he will live, whether Donal be his heir or another," I answered, and went out.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

WHEN I left my Lady Betty's house I was so bewildered by my uncle's charges against me that for a time I could see no escape from my perplexity. But, when I grew more calm and my brain more cool, I saw that this, too, was a part of Donal's scheming. I knew not how he had succeeded in fixing upon me the crime of treachery of which he himself had been guilty, and that my uncle should have believed him so readily, judging me unheard, filled me with pain and anger. "Let him believe what he will," I said to myself, "and make whomsoever he will his heir in my place, I care not." But when I thought of him lying, maybe dead, in my cousin's chamber, my heart grew weak, and I remembered only that he was old and had loved me once. I would trust to time to reveal the truth.

But the matter which gave me most concern was what Lady Betty had said concerning Miss Yelverton.

'That she loved me I had no doubt, albeit she had said farewell to love. Betrothed to Donal! The thought stung me to madness. Whatever happened, I swore that she should never be his wife, by whatever scheming he had won her promise, if indeed he had won it.

I was not without some fear lest Lady Betty should forget or at least delay to send the message which I had written, and I had some thought of returning, albeit I knew that she did not wish it. So I resolved to be patient until the morrow if need be. Then I turned my steps towards the Mitre so that I might warn the innkeeper that a message would be delivered to him for me and bid him keep it safely.

When I reached the river bank, a carriage went rapidly by me, yet not so rapidly but that I caught sight of a pale, sad face that looked from the window. It was the Countess of Galtymore taking leave of the city. There was one heart at least no less troubled than my own.

The innkeeper received me with a great appearance of respect and readily pledged himself to do as I bade him. As I was turning to leave, he informed me that Sir Harry MacCabe was within.

“I would see him,” I said, with a sudden hope that he might help me still further.

The innkeeper bowed and ushered me into a private room.

“I will inform Sir Harry of your desire,” he said, leaving me.

He was scarce gone when Sir Harry MacCabe entered.

“You have done me one service,” I said, holding out my hand, “will you do me another?”

“As many as you require, if they are in my power.”

I thanked him, and remembering his words when I had met him at the tavern before, I called for wine.

When we had drunk together, I spoke.

“I believe that what you have told me is true. Can you tell me if, among the names given by my—Mr. O’Brien to his Excellency, there was that of Miss Yelverton.”

“It is true that there was,” he answered, smiling.

“Why did you not tell me of this before?”

“Since they are of small importance.”

“They?” I echoed.

“Yes, since Miss Yelverton also is a conspirator.”

“And in danger?”

He smiled again.

“I think that they are in no danger.”

“I do not understand.”

“Since Mr. O’Brien will save them.”

“How can he save them?” I asked, impatiently.

“They say that Miss Yelverton is very beautiful; whether she be or not I cannot tell, but Mr. O’Brien loves her and would fain marry her. So as a reward for his services, he begged for the life of Mr. Yelverton and for the hand of his daughter in marriage.”

“And the Viceroy?” I exclaimed, breathlessly.

“Has promised him both, and very readily I think, since he will save thereby a goodly sum of money. Mr. Yelverton is lucky indeed to have a daughter to save him, and Miss Yelverton to have won the love of one so powerful as Mr. Donal O’Brien.”

But I did not heed his words, for I felt stunned by this sudden revelation.

For a moment, seeing the obstacles in my way, my resolve faltered, for how could I hold her against Donal and the Viceroy’s pledge? I covered my face

with my hands, wrestling with fate in agony of spirit. Then I sprang to my feet again.

“I have sworn to save her against the world, and by God I will.”

“I will help you,” Sir Harry exclaimed, “even if it be against the Viceroy, for I think a woman should be wooed, not bought.”

As he spoke the door opened and the innkeeper entered. He held a letter in his hand. I snatched it quickly, and tearing it open, read:

“Kilgobbin Abbey, at midnight, alone.

“BEATRIX YELVERTON.”

I folded it hastily and thrust it into my breast. Then I saw Sir Harry’s eyes watching me inquiringly.

“Can I be of service?” he asked.

I glanced at the clock, it was now near eleven; there was still time enough, but none for delay.

“My good friend,” I answered, “you can help me. Pray go at once to the Castle stables, and bid my servant instantly saddle my chestnut horse and bring him hither. Bid him place loaded pistols in the holsters, lest he forget.”

When he was gone, I called for more wine and drank it, pacing the room impatiently. It seemed a long time, and yet it was but a little while, when Sir Harry returned.

“Your horse is without,” he said; “good luck to your journey.”

I wrung the honest fellow's hand, and leaping into the saddle put spurs to the horse. In a few minutes I had left the city behind me and was riding towards the mountains.

CHAPTER XXIX.

KILGOBBIN ABBEY.

KILGOBBIN ABBEY, an ancient church in ruins, stood in a graveyard at the foot of the mountains. It was in truth a strange place for a tryst, but of this I had no thought till afterwards. I was conscious only that every stride of my good horse was taking me nearer to the woman whom I loved and was so like to lose.

The night was fair and the moon shone bright. A sweet cool breeze blew from the mountains in my face. While I was still in the city I dared not ride as fast as I would, lest I should excite suspicion, and perhaps pursuit. But when I had reached the open country I gave reins to the horse, my heart and hope rising with every stride. It was scarce past midnight when I reached the graveyard of Kilgobbin. I dismounted, and pushing open the broken wicket-gate, I led the horse into the graveyard. The place was full of treacherous holes, so that I dared not lead

him far. I threw the reins, therefore, over a cross close by and left him. Advancing a little, I saw with a thrill of surprise a second horse. It was browsing contentedly on the rank grass that grew above the dead. My heart throbbed when coming near I espied a woman's saddle. I looked about eagerly for its rider, but could see no human form. Then, by the light of the moon, I sought the entrance to the mouldering Abbey. A sigh fell on my ear. I rushed forward, and saw standing in the shadow of the wall, Miss Yelverton. She was dressed in a dark riding habit, and at her feet lay a riding-whip. Her head was bent and her white hands clasped together.

I had much ado to control my heart, for I would have taken her in my arms, but I knew that would be to surrender my strength while I still had need of it.

"I have come as you bade me," she said, meekly.

"Why have you chosen this place?" I asked, and I was at so much pains to hold my heart in check that my voice sounded stern.

"It was safe and not far off," she said, raising her eyes to my face. I saw in them that she had expected

a different greeting, but the thought of Donal and what she had promised him made me cruel.

“You are then——?” I began.

“In hiding, since our plan has miscarried.

“And in danger?”

“It may well be so.”

“Since the conspiracy was betrayed.”

“The night is cold,” she said, shivering a little and coming nearer to me.

I took the cloak from my shoulders and would have thrown it about her, but she put it from her, and turning her head a little away, stood looking at the ground.

“Beatrix!” I said, softly.

She looked up at me. Her eyes were luminous and her face full of light.

I caught her to my heart. Feeling my arms about her a little cry broke from her lips. My passion was set free. I knew nothing save that she loved me. She laughed softly under my kisses.

“No longer cold, sweetheart,” I whispered.

“No longer cold, beloved.”

I would have set her down, but she clung to me.

"Save me?" she murmured.

I held her from me and looked into her face.

"Is it from death you would be saved?"

"From worse than death," and her voice broke.

"Is it from Donal O'Brien?"

She shuddered.

"Why did you promise to marry him?"

"I was the price. They said it was for my country's sake, so I promised."

"I think I shall save your life, but how shall I save you from your promise?"

She dropped on her knees, her hands stretched out imploringly.

"Save me from him and from the shame of his caresses, save me, Theobald."

"Tell me how I can save you, and as God is my witness I will give my life to save you."

She rose to her feet and threw her arms about my neck, holding me fast. Her breath was hot upon my cheek.

"There is but one way," she whispered.

"And that?" I murmured.

Her eyes grew cold as steel.

“Theobald, to save me you must kill him.”

“Kill him?” I cried in amazement.

“There is no other way, so you must kill him. If you love me with the heart and not with the lips, you will save me. His life against mine, which shall it be?”

My brain was on fire, and for the tumult that was in my heart I could not speak. She fell upon my breast, clasping me in the sweet prison of her arms.

“See how I love you, you are my lord and I am your slave. Take me and do what you will, but give me your love and save me. You are brave, and so, too, I think is he. He will meet you at the sword’s point or with the pistol. Will you fight for me, Theobald, or will you bring shame on me because, for all my love, I am defenceless? Or will you shame me still more to think that my love is so poor a thing? Is it so, Theobald?” and her lips were moist on my cheek.

“My God!” I cried, in the extremity of my anguish, “the blood of a kinsman!”

"The blood of a kinsman," she echoed, scornfully, drawing herself from me, "nay, rather the blood of a traitor, who deserves no such honourable death."

"But he is faithful to his master," I said.

"Faithful!" she exclaimed. "I tell you he is a traitor to the Viceroy and to the King. See here if my words be not true."

She drew a packet from her bosom and gave it to me. Like one in a dream I opened the packet and held the paper towards the moonlight. A cry of amazement broke from my lips. On the paper were marked the words *Most secret*. The letter was addressed to his Excellency, the Viceroy, and was written by the Lord Sydney. In it were many State secrets.

"For such information as this I am the price. Will you suffer it to be paid?"

For a moment my shame at the dishonour of my kinsman was stronger than my love. Donal O'Brien was doubly a traitor, for he had betrayed the Viceroy's secrets no less than those of the conspirators.

"It shall not be paid," I answered, taking her in my arms.

CHAPTER XXX.

MY COUSIN DONAL.

FROM the caresses of love and from the kisses of passion I came back to face the danger and difficulty which beset us. But my heart was strong and my resolve was fixed. I would save her and her father's life, even at the cost of Donal's death or disgrace. As soon as might be, I would confront my cousin and give him choice either to fly the country or pay the penalty for his treason.

On the day following my discovery of his double guilt, and at an hour when I knew that he would be alone, I sent my servant to him to say that I would speak with him on a matter of importance. In an instant he returned, saying that Mr. O'Brien was at leisure and would see me.

So having assured myself that the State paper, which Miss Yelverton had given me, was safe in my breast, and remembering also my sword in case of need, I entered my cousin's chamber.

He was seated at a table, upon which were many papers, and he seemed to be immersed in business. Putting them from him, he rose and made me a low bow.

“You do me a great honour,” he said, with a smile. “Pray believe that I am not insensible.”

But the mockery of his voice scarce touched me. There was a flush upon his pale cheeks, and his eyes were very bright.

“I have business with you, and that of grave moment, so I would not be overheard.”

“You are grown suspicious, cousin Theobald, more than befits an honest gentleman.”

“’Tis not of my own honesty that I have come to speak, but of yours.”

A shadow fell a moment on his face, but still he smiled.

“I forgive your country breeding,” he said, “since you are young and untutored.”

“Young I may be, but of late I have learned many things.”

“I am glad of it, since you stand so much in need of it.”

"I have learned that you are a traitor," I said, very calmly.

His face blanched and he half sprang from his seat, while his eyes seemed to seek a weapon. Then he broke into a harsh laugh.

"A traitor!" he cried, "a word most often in the mouth of a traitor, but boy though you are, you shall answer for this."

"That I shall most willingly," I returned, "and you, too, shall answer for your betrayal."

"Bah," he exclaimed, "I did but serve the King when I revealed the conspiracy of your friend the Earl of Galtymore."

"Was it serving the King to betray the secrets of State to those who conspired against his Majesty?"

His face grew white to the lips.

"It is false," he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"It is true," and I drew the paper from my breast.

"Here is my proof."

He stretched out his hands to snatch the paper from me, his eyes full of hate and fear. For a moment I thought that he would spring upon me, then he fell back again.

"I am betrayed," he muttered.

"'Tis the penalty of treachery. Listen to me, Donal. For the sake of your kinship, and to spare the honour of my race, I will be merciful, and save you from a death of shame."

A strange gleam came into his eyes, but he did not answer.

"I give you twenty-four hours, within which you must leave the country or die, as pleases you best. If you are still alive and in the country after that time, his Excellency shall know that you are a traitor, and the proof shall be laid before him. This I grant you for the sake of our common blood, upon which you have brought shame, albeit you have merited no such clemency at my hands. If you go or die before noon to-morrow, I will keep the secret of your shame."

I turned to leave him, but he stretched out his hand to restrain me. He seemed to struggle a while with himself before he spoke. Then he said in a low voice—

"If I fly the country or die within twenty-four hours shall you marry Miss Yelverton?"

“That I hope to do whether you go or stay,” I answered.

His eyes gleamed like those of a wild beast. Then a spasm distorted his features, so horribly that I could not forbear to shudder. With a groan he fell back into his seat, and so I left him.

When I was calm again, for my meeting with my cousin had disturbed me more than a little, I endeavored to review the events which had taken place, in the hope of finding in them some guidance for my future conduct. I had small doubt that Donal would do as I had bidden him. Whether he put an end to his own life, which he was like to do since he was no craven, or fled the country, mattered nothing. Since he was a traitor, the Viceroy was already absolved from his promise. And, in truth, I felt some bitterness in my heart against his Grace that he would so readily sacrifice a young and beautiful woman to the necessities of his state-craft, and save the bribe of money for the needy villains who found in treachery the readiest means of supporting their extravagance.

Thinking of my uncle Tony, I marvelled to find

him the guest of my Lady Betty and how it had come about, for I could not doubt that their ancient friendship had been renewed. "My uncle," I thought bitterly, "has forgiven them all so that he may lack no enmity against me." Donal had schemed to steal from me my uncle's love, and to oust me from my inheritance, but he had gained little thereby. I put my hand into my breast to assure myself that the paper was safe. It was there, and would remain there until Donal had made his choice. If he did as I bade him, I would restore it secretly, and so save his name from ignominy. If he refused, then he should fare as a traitor.

But indeed, albeit I arranged matters thus in my mind, there were still dangers before me of which I could take no thought, since they were unlooked for.

On this day I was bidden to dine with the Viceroy, and his Excellency was pleased to show me many marks of his favour, causing me to sit near himself, and often addressing me in the most friendly fashion. When we had risen from the table, he drew me aside, and gave me a letter, commanding me with all

haste and secrecy to deliver it to the Speaker, at his seat at Edmondbury, near Lucan.

I was greatly pleased with so signal a mark of his Grace's confidence in my honesty, notwithstanding what had been whispered against it, and remembering, too, how soon I might sue for his clemency.

I bowed, taking the letter, and swore that if a fleet horse and a sharp sword could achieve aught in the matter, I was not like to fail.

At that he held out his hand to me, smiling very sweetly.

"I know it, and, if Rutland lives, you shall not complain of fortune."

In a little while I was in the saddle and riding briskly towards the village of Lucan.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MIDNIGHT ENCOUNTER.

WHEN I reached Edmondbury, Mr. Speaker's house was most brilliantly illuminated, and I judged that he was entertaining a large company. This surprised me but little, albeit the state of the country was not such that those who loved her could find much reason for merriment. For it has always been so with the Irish, that when public affairs called for gravity and wise counsel, they have been found making merry, with jest and laughter, as though they would snatch to-day's mirth from the bitterness of the morrow.

Mr. Speaker received me in friendly fashion, albeit his eye was cold. His face showed some concern as he read his Grace's letter.

"The bird has flown," he muttered, when he came to the end of the writing. Then seeing that my gaze was fixed upon him, I thought he started a little as though his words had betrayed him. He

made haste to beg that I would join the company, who would, he assured me, be much concerned to learn that I had ridden so far to find an inhospitable house at the end of my journey. For the honour of his house, therefore, he begged me not to depart at once. His manner did not deceive me, for he was like one reciting the words of another and as though the words froze on his tongue.

“I thank you, sir, for your kindness to my master’s servant,” I answered, “but indeed, I may make no delay, seeing that my poor services are needed.”

“A good master makes, as it seems, a faithful servant,” he answered, coldly. “But lest my name should suffer dishonour thereby, I pray that you will not leave before you have drunk a bottle of wine.”

So I drank the wine, and afterwards was glad of it, for the night was cold and very dark.

“His Excellency is happy in having so faithful a servant,” he said as I took my leave.

I bowed to him without making answer. Then leaping into the saddle, and throwing a coin to the fellow who had held my horse, I rode rapidly down the avenue. When I reached the gate I turned and

looked back. The light from the hall fell upon the figure of a man standing beneath the portico, and I made no doubt that it was Mr. Speaker who watched me, albeit I could discover no reason why he had not instantly rejoined his guests.

For some distance I rode swiftly, for the wind was keen, but the generous wine soon warmed my blood so that I no longer felt the need of haste. When I had gone some distance in the Phoenix Park, I fell into thought, remembering the night I had come to the city and all that had befallen me since. My heart was heavy enough, for I was not grown used to trouble, albeit I had become acquainted with many traitors. I had been taught to love honour and truth, and to repel falsehood with the sword. But since I had been to court, I knew that these things were no longer possible, but that treachery was to be met with guile, and falsehood with feigned belief.

When I came to the city I had believed myself to be well armed; now I knew that the tongue was a more cunning and more deadly enemy than the sword, and that he who fired straight was no match for him whose speech was crooked.

That my uncle should have believed evil of me was bitter, and the fury of his anger against me and his reproaches stung me so deeply that I could scarce remember his love for me. Now that I had unmasked the traitor and held him in my grasp, I was not without some doubt that I should ever obtain my uncle's forgiveness when I had shown him how greatly he had erred in accusing me and believing the calumnies of Donal.

I half wished that I had sought a cleaner and more honourable service abroad, with only a soldier's duties to perform, but the thought of Miss Yelverton and her love flooded my heart, so that I felt shame at my own misgivings. A traitor, indeed, she might seem, and pledged to another, but I looked deeper into her bosom, and found her true as she was beautiful, however she might have been deceived. In truth it was no time to repine or grow faint of heart, seeing what business was before me, and that needing a resolute heart. I drew the sluggish rein tighter, touching my horse gently with the spur. The night was so dark that I could not see more than a few paces in front of me. As my horse sprang

forward I thought that I could discern forms about me in the gloom. The place was of evil repute in the night-time, and many a careless gentleman had left his purse, if not his life, beneath the trees of this lonely park.

Gripping the rein tightly, I drew my sword and dashed forward. Right in front two bulky forms blocked my way. Turning my horse a little aside, I rode at one of them, lunging at him with my sword. The sword-point pierced something soft and a smothered cry told me that I had not missed. I strove to draw my pistol, but before I could succeed the second fellow was upon me, while the sound of hoofs told me that I must swiftly make an end of the business. I parried a furious blow at my head, and then hoping to reach him before he recovered, I rode at him. But he was a skilful horseman and well mounted, and swerving to one side I went past him. No word was spoken, so that I judged that they were not common thieves. Moreover I had in my breast what was more precious than any purse that I had ever possessed—the secret paper that Miss Yelverton had given me, and this made me resolve

to sell my life as dearly as might be, if I could not save it.

Changing my sword to the left hand, I drew a pistol just as two of them bore down upon me. Taking aim at the nearest, I drew the trigger. There was a flash in the pan but no report. The pistol had missed fire. I cast the worthless iron with all my might in the fellow's face. I saw him reel in the saddle, then a mighty blow fell upon my head from behind, and I remembered nothing more.

CHAPTER XXXII.

REVENGE.

WHEN I came back to life a great noise roared in my ears and my head ached mightily. For a time I could not think where I was or what was befallen me. Then my brain became clearer and I remembered. I knew that I was no longer under the open sky, but in a house, for the boards upon which I lay were hard and the air heavy and ill-smelling. Beneath me I could hear the sound of running water, and so I judged I was not far from the river, albeit why I had been brought hither I could not tell.

I opened my eyes. The room was dark. Then I strove to rise, but my head swam so that I was fain to lie still awhile. I put my hand in my breast to assure myself that the paper was safe, but to my great dismay I found that it was no longer there.

Rage and disappointment cleared my brain and sharpened my wits. I had been set upon and robbed

by no common highwaymen, but by Donal or Donal's hirelings.

I raised myself upon my arm and looked about me, but could discern nothing for the darkness. Then I heard the sound of voices, and a faint glimmer of light penetrated the room. I lay back with closed eyes and listened. The voice that spoke was rough and angry.

"I will be no murderer," it said, "though need has made me a robber, who was once a man of honour. And the gentleman has fought bravely and well deserves his life."

"If he dies you will gain a hundred guineas."

The voice that answered was soft and calm.

I was shaking with rage, so that I had much ado to remember that I was unarmed and still weak, and therefore no match for them. For the voice that spoke was the voice of my cousin Donal.

But the other broke out furiously.

"A hundred devils! Of what profit are they to me if I lose my soul?"

"Of what profit will your soul be if you lose your

life with so many sins on your conscience that not even Father O'Leary can absolve you?"

"Who spoke of losing my life?"

"If he lives you will hang as high as Hainan."

"Who will betray me?"

"He will, since he has wounded you in the breast."

"And you?"

"I have no fear of death."

"Neither have I; but I am no murderer."

The sound of the voice was familiar to my ear, yet I could not tell whose it was.

Then a third fellow broke in impatiently—

"The gentleman is dead, whether it be murder or no murder, and if we make delay we shall soon be as dead as he."

"How do I know that he is dead?" asked the other, beginning to waver.

"'Twas I that struck him from the saddle, and so I should know. But if you doubt it look at him, where he has lain since we cast him there."

On this they entered the room. I lay very still, though my heart beat fast.

"If he be not as dead as our forefather Adam,

then there is no truth in science. See where I laid his head open and yet it does not bleed. There is no surer sign of death than this, or I know nothing of blood-letting," and he held the candle near to my head.

"You speak as a leech, not as a gentleman," the other answered, gloomily, "and yet I was his friend once and went near to loving him. God pardon me, for he would have been a friend to me."

Now I knew who it was that spoke for mercy, for it was Tom Delahunt, whom the wine-cup and the gambling-table had brought to this.

"There is naught against your loving him," Donal answered, with a sneer, "since your love will profit him as much now as it did in life. Corcoran, have you the rope ready?"

"The rope? What would you do with the rope?"

"Bind him, so that he float the better."

"And then?"

"Open the trap-door and throw him into the Poddle river. In a few minutes he will be floating out to sea."

I listened with horror, but I was resolved that

they should not bind me. If they attempted it I would throw myself upon Donal and kill him first. Beneath me I could hear the waters rushing; if I could reach the open river alive there was some hope to escape.

The fellow approached me with the rope, while I drew a deep breath, preparing to spring. But now Tom Delahunt showed himself more my friend than he did when I met him in the Angel tavern.

“No, by God, you shall not!” he cried out, seizing the ruffian and drawing him back. “If I did not defend him when he was living I will protect him now that he is dead, aye, if need be, with my life. He shall not be bound, but shall have his limbs free as he was used.”

“As you will,” Donal answered, sullenly.

Then he drew up the trap-door. A torrent of cold, foul air filled the chamber. My cousin and Corcoran seized me by the feet and dragged me to the hole. Then the latter drew back.

“I have no liking for the business! I will do no more,” he muttered.

“There is no need,” was the answer, “now that

my enemy has been delivered into my hands. Go! and my curse be upon you in death as it was in life. At last Donal O'Brien has triumphed, and the woman whom you love shall lie by Donal and grow warm with his kisses." Then, exerting all his strength, he pushed me nearer to the trap-door. Delahunt suddenly caught my hand and kissed it. In another moment I fell into the foul and seething waters below.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HAND OF FATE.

FOR a few moments the foul stream swept me along without resistance, for I was so choked with filth and poisoned by the intolerable stench that I made no effort to save myself. Then, scarce knowing what I did, I struggled for life. The stream, though not deep, was very swift, so that I had much difficulty to find my feet and so keep my head out of the water. This at length I accomplished, pressing my hands against the slimy wall of the drain.

The surface of the water was little more than a foot from the roof, so that I must needs press my head against the latter lest I should smother. For a time I remained crouching, my hands clutching the wall and my feet fixed firmly against the current. I spat the filth from my mouth, and finding that the air was less foul near the roof of the drain, I put my lips close to it, sucking it in. This gave me some hope, for if the tide were full in the river Liffey the

mouth of the Poddle would be several feet below the surface of the water, so that no air could enter, and I should die before the ebb. I knew that I could not long breathe the air and live, and albeit the air at first refreshed me somewhat, my limbs were growing weaker and my head beginning to burn as if with fever.

As I began to move down the stream again there was a great splashing about me, and a sound not unlike the flapping of strong wings. Now the horror of the thing struck cold on my heart, knowing how terrible was the death that threatened me. Swarms of rats had gathered about me, and albeit at first they fled from me when I began to move, every instant they became bolder, biting at my limbs and rending my clothes. One, too, more daring than the rest, leapt from the water and caught my hand. With a cry of fear and pain I tore him off and dashed him against the wall. Then, half fainting and beside myself with horror, I rushed stumbling down the drain, shouting and splashing to keep my enemies at bay.

Suddenly I turned an angle of the wall. A breath

of cool air smote my forehead and the darkness seemed less intense. With all that was left of my fast failing strength I pressed forward and plunged into the deep waters of the Liffey.

The cold was very great and my limbs were numbed thereby, so that, albeit I was a strong swimmer, yet I could do but little else than keep myself from sinking. Nor, indeed, was more necessary, since the tide was ebbing fast, and carried me swiftly along with it towards the sea.

In my present plight I dared not enter the more public parts of the city, lest the suspicion of the watch should fall upon me and I should perhaps be made a prisoner and lodged in gaol as a thief or a footpad. So, despite the cold, I swam on until I was come some distance below the College. Then, feeling the ground beneath my feet, I waded to the shore and clambered up the bank with much pain and difficulty. Here I paused to take breath and rid myself of some of the mud and filth that clung to me. I was in some doubt what I should do, but, in truth, pain and necessity quickened my wits.

In so distressful a state I dared not, even if I

would, make my way to the Castle. Yet I knew not how I should procure a change of clothing, and my teeth were chattering with cold, albeit the anger in my heart kept my blood warm. In my perplexity I bethought me of the tailor who had served me before, when I sought his aid for Lady Betty, and whom his Excellency had knighted to please my cousin, after that he had drunk deep at her house.

With what haste I could, but cautiously withal, lest any one should stay me, I hurried to the worthy tailor's house, seeking the darkest and least frequented passages thereto. On the way thither I met poor wretches, little less unfortunate than I was myself, but they looked at me indifferently, as though such sorry creatures were too familiar that they should feel surprised at them. So I went on swiftly and none bade me stop.

At length, to my great joy, I caught sight of the tailor's sign. At the same moment the door opened beneath it and one entered. Before he could shut it again I sprang forward and entered the house with him. It was the worthy tailor himself. A cry of fear broke from his lips, and he made as though he

would summon help; but I pushed to the door and set my back against it.

“Not a word, if you value your life,” I said; “but if you will serve me you will find that I am your friend.”

“I feared that you were an enemy,” he said, in a quavering voice and with an eager glance towards the door.

“I am not, unless you make me one,” I returned.

“I am a poor man, sir,” he pleaded, “and have but a few crowns in the house.”

I broke out laughing; then I seized him by the shoulders.

“Look at me!” I cried. “Do you think that I am a robber?”

He raised his timid eyes to my face. Then he fell on the ground, clasping my knees and begging me to forgive him.

I caught him by the collar and set him upon his trembling limbs.

“I have no time for this, and as for forgiveness, that will depend on how you serve me. Now take me to a warm room, for my limbs ache with cold.”

“Will your honour be pleased to follow me?” he said, leading the way to a well-lighted, comfortable chamber. On the table stood a bottle of whiskey and some glasses.

The tailor lifted up his hands in horror when he beheld what a plight I was in, but disregarding him, I seized the bottle, and filling a glass with whiskey, drank it right off. Then I turned to my bewildered host.

“I am upon the King’s business,” I said, “and any one who disobeys me will answer for it to his Majesty’s justices. I have been attacked by traitors and have narrowly escaped with my life. In the King’s name I command you to aid me.”

“I am your honour’s servant,” he replied, trembling; “but I am a man of peace, and of little account with the sword.”

“I need not that,” I answered, smiling; “but water for washing, clean linen, a suit of clothes as near as can be to resemble those that I wear, and a sword that I can rely on.”

“All these I can give your honour, and at once,” he returned.

When I had washed and bathed my wound, which, in truth, was not so deep as I had imagined it to be, I quickly donned the clothes that he brought me, choosing such garments as fitted me best, for he had many suits, and all of them at my disposal.

“His Excellency shall know how loyal and faithful a servant the King has in you,” I said.

Then I went forth and hastened towards the Castle. The city was quiet, for soldiers were stationed at the street corners, and many about the Parliament House.

On reaching the Castle, I went at once to my chamber and lit a candle. Then taking a pistol, I saw to the priming and placed it in my belt. This should not fail me, as the other had, through treachery. I was resolved to recover the paper which had been taken from me without delay. Holding the candle in my hand, I went noiselessly down the corridor to the chamber where Donal slept, albeit I had no certainty that I should find him. I feared too, lest, if he were there, the door should be locked, and so I should be balked of my revenge.

I turned the handle, the door yielded, and I

entered the room and stood by the bed. There lay Donal, his face flushed and his breathing heavy. The light fell upon his face; he started from his sleep and sat upright. I did not speak, but stood holding the candle in my hand. Then his gaze fell upon me. His hair stood on end, and his eyeballs seemed to start from their sockets with terror. His gaze fascinated me, so that I forgot that which I had come to say to him. I stood looking at him in silence. His lips moved, but no sound came from them, and he shook as though he were smitten with a palsy. Never had I seen such terrible fear in the face of a man, but my heart was hard and cruel, remembering the evil that he had done me.

I took a step nearer to him, still holding the candle in my hand.

At this he gave a great shriek, stretching out his hands and beating the air. Then he fell back upon the bed, and foam covered his lips. For a moment he lay quiet, and I stood looking at him. He opened his eyes and looked at me. The light was gone from them, and they were calm and vacant. Then he muttered meaningless words, and his voice was no longer that of a man, but of a child.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

WHEN his Excellency learned what was befallen Donal O'Brien, he showed but little concern.

"Mr. Orde must find another secretary," he said, "and you have lost a kinsman. Yet I do not think he was your friend."

"He was not my friend," I returned. "Albeit I had never injured him."

"In the Dean's madhouse he can do you no more wrong."

I looked keenly at his Grace, wondering how much he knew of my cousin's hate against me; for of his attempt to murder me I had been silent, as well as of his treason, because it was no longer necessary to speak.

Since I had a great abundance of hair, I had little difficulty in concealing the wound on my head, and none knew of it save the worthy tailor and those who

had attacked me, albeit it had caused some alarm when my horse returned riderless to the Castle stables. But danger had taught the servants the wisdom of silence, so that his Excellency knew nothing of the matter.

The se'nnight's grace which the Viceroy had allowed to the conspirators before issuing warrants for their arrest was now near expired. But, as Mr. Attorney-General had declared would happen, the leaders had already fled the country, leaving behind them but few of sufficient importance to be dangerous to the kingdom. Moreover, the chief witness of their treachery was no longer capable of giving evidence against them. This made me very hopeful, albeit I knew that Mr. Orde held in his hands abundant proofs of their guilt.

To reward me for my faithful services, the Viceroy promised me the pardon of one traitor, whomsoever I would, and this filled me with joy, since I had earned the life of Miss Yelverton.

The Earl of Galtymore had already escaped, and the Countess had followed him. The Lord Bishop of Derry was said to be in France, but for his safety

I had no fear, since the love of Mr. Pitt would save him.

The Viceroy, indeed, was ever on the side of mercy, and wrote to Mr. Pitt, declaring that the Irish were more to be feared as allies than as enemies, seeing how great was their desire to destroy one another. "If we punish them," said he, "they will unite in hating us; but, if we treat them with clemency, they will most assuredly quarrel amongst themselves, and so promote the cause which we have at heart."

And so it proved, for in a little while the anger of the people was directed, not against the Viceroy and the English, but against those who had spoken to them of freedom, bidding them rid themselves of the bondage of the English.

I could not forbear thinking of my uncle Tony, and I was troubled, remembering how I had left him. I was resolved, therefore, now that I had leisure, to go to my cousin's house and inquire if he had safely come out of his sickness.

When I entered Lady Betty's drawing-room I saw my uncle sitting there alone. I paused on the threshold, uncertain whether to advance or with-

draw, for I could not tell how he would receive me. When he saw me he rose heavily, and with outstretched arms came towards me.

“My boy,” he said, and his voice was weak, “I know the truth, and how greatly I have wronged you. An old man begs for your forgiveness.”

But I would not suffer him to say more, and putting my arm about him, I led him gently to a seat.

“My name is disgraced forever,” he went on, and his gentleness grieved me, seeing how greatly broken he was that he showed no anger. “But I thank God that you whom I have loved as a son are no traitor.”

“The secret shall die with him,” I returned, “and none shall know of it.”

His eyes flashed and his voice was stronger.

“Justice shall be done, whoever suffer for it.”

“Justice has been done,” I said.

“Is he dead?”

“To the world, since he is in the Dean’s mad-house.”

“The judgment of God!” he answered, and covered his face with his hands.

While he was so, Lady Betty entered. She knelt by his side and kissed his hand.

"You are a good child, Betty, and God forgive me that I ever doubted you."

"What matters it when I have your love and Theobald's too?"

Then she turned to me.

"Your presence is opportune," she said. "Mr. Yelverton's life is in danger and Beatrix bids you save him."

I drew back as though I had been struck.

"Save him," I exclaimed, "and lose her!"

"Would Theobald Dillon wed the daughter of a felon?"

"That he would," I returned with heat, "if she be Beatrix Yelverton."

"That may not be," she said, "since, if her father dies, I do not think that she will live."

"Is Mr. Yelverton in hiding?"

"In Newgate."

"I know not what to do," I answered, thinking how I had resolved to beg the life of Miss Yelverton from the Viceroy.

“Save the father, Theobald,” said my uncle, “and the Viceroy will spare the daughter for her beauty.”

“Be it so, then,” I said, and turned to leave them.

As I did so, I saw my cousin’s eyes grow bright and the blood fill her cheeks.

“You have met Mr. Blake before,” she murmured.

“Not long since,” I returned, making that gentleman a bow.

“When you thought me a fool for minding my own business,” he said, smiling.

“I have little doubt of your wisdom.”

“Since you have begun to distrust your own.”

“There was a time when I thought you a fool beside me,” I retorted, glancing at my cousin.

“When you were younger,” he answered, with a laugh.

“I am not too young to learn, and my cousin has taught me something.”

“And that?”

“That love is the best thing in life,” I returned, making them both a low bow.

Then I left them.

When I reached Dame Street I found my steps

impeded by a crowd which was gathered together outside a tavern, so that I must needs push my way through it by force or step into the mud, which was deep upon the street. While I hesitated four men came out of the tavern bearing the body of a man. I pressed forward and looked at the dead man's face. It was covered with blood, which flowed fast from a wound in the forehead. But notwithstanding the blood stains and the grey pallor of death, I recognised the once beautiful face of Tom Delahunt. Used as I was grown to such sights, for an instant I felt faint and sick. Then, turning to one that came out of the tavern, I inquired how it had come about.

He shrugged his shoulders, as though I might readily have found an answer to my question.

"Cards and the wine-cup," he answered.

"Then he must have lost?" I said.

"A hundred guineas; to him whom you see holding his head."

"And then?"

"Before one could tell what he would do, he stood up and, drawing a pistol, cried out aloud, 'This is

the price of blood,' and in a moment he was as you have seen. God rest him anyhow, for he was a brave gentleman."

"God rest him, indeed," I returned, "for there was none braver."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FORGIVENESS.

THE death of Tom Delahunt grieved me more than I had thought possible, and yet I could not disguise from myself that his life had ended opportunely, seeing to what he was come—he who had been so brave and so honourable a gentleman. And albeit the price of his life had been meant as the price of my life, I felt no ill-will against him, but remembered only that he had been a friend to me when first I came to the city and had few that I could call friends. From thinking on this, I came back to the present and to the difficulties which still confronted me if I would save Miss Yelverton.

It was very bitter to me that I should be forced to beg the life of Bully Yelverton, whom I had never known but as an enemy, in the place of that of his daughter, whom I loved beyond all the world. For a moment I was filled with anger that he had not fled the country with the Earl of Galtymore and the other

conspirators, but my anger became extinguished when I reflected that, had he done so, his daughter would most certainly have fled with him, and so made vain and worthless the Viceroy's pledge. It was in my mind to seek his Excellency, and, again reminding him of my services, beg him to spare the daughter because I loved her and because she was a woman. But I feared lest I should accomplish nothing thereby, for his Grace, albeit he was generous, was wont, at times, to show himself very haughty to those who would meet his clemency with further importunity.

Moreover, I knew that suspicion was fallen upon my uncle Tony, as well as upon Lady Betty, and that it was due to his Grace of Rutland that they were not now keeping company with Mr. Yelverton in Newgate.

While I was in much trouble and perplexity, not knowing what to do, I saw Mr. Hasler, the court chamberlain, coming towards me. He was smiling very happily as though the world pleased him well.

"It is the darkest hour before the dawn," he said, "and now the sun is shining."

"May it ever shine," I returned. "Do you come from her Excellency?"

"This very moment."

"And she is at leisure?"

"I left her alone."

A sudden hope filled my breast. Without answering, I hurried past him and made for her Grace's apartments, my heart beating fast.

The Duchess received me with great kindness, most graciously giving me her hand to kiss. She was alone, as Mr. Hasler had said, and her face was full of joy, albeit there was some pride in it, too.

"What news do you bring?" she asked, smiling into my eyes. "Will you make us your debtor again by fresh services?"

"Alas, madam, I am a bankrupt."

"How so?"

"Since all my services have been rewarded and still I am a beggar."

"Are you come to beg of me?"

I bowed my head in silence.

"What would you have of me? and if it stand

within the eye of honour, of my lord's and mine, and be not too great a gift, you shall not be sent empty away. What would you have?"

"Pardon, your Excellency."

"You have done no wrong."

"For a woman."

"Ha, for a woman; and who is she?"

"Beatrice Yelverton."

"Is she, too, a traitor?"

"She is but a woman," I murmured.

"And so must needs be a traitor," and her voice was cold.

"And so most deserves your Grace's forgiveness."

"It is false," she burst out, passionately, "for has she not brought double dishonour on me, since I too am a woman and she is a traitor?"

"Your Grace will be merciful, for she has suffered greatly," I said.

"She has deserved to suffer greatly," the Duchess answered. "And yet I loved her and desired her happiness, but she has plotted against me and against my happiness," and the anger died from her voice, as

when a wind strikes a forest, at first loud and vehement, yet in a moment grows gentle and ends in a wail of sadness.

"No, not against your Grace," I cried, "since she loves you."

"Loves me? Indeed I must believe it, since many have done evil in the name of love."

"Believe me, madam, it is political."

"Political," she cried, and her eyes blazed again; "that is the plea of all wrongdoers, when their sins have found them out, so that they may escape punishment."

"I have been faithful," I began.

"I do not deny it," she answered, smiling a little; "what, then, would you have?"

"Your forgiveness for her—her whom I love."

"She is unworthy of your love."

"I would my love were worthy of her."

"She is a traitress."

"I pray your Grace to believe that she is not."

"Then love has made you deaf and blind and taken away your reason."

"I would be so blinded, madam," I answered, see-

ing that there was little good in seeking to defend myself.

“I had thought such love was only to be found in the lying verses of the poets,” she said, a little bitterly, as it seemed, “but there will be time to repent of it. Take the jade and make her, if you can, loyal to us and to the King’s Majesty,” and at this she made a deep courtesy, albeit the smile on her face was mocking.

“Will his Excellency——” I began.

“I have pledged my word that Miss Yelverton shall be forgiven,” she interrupted, very haughtily.

I knelt and kissed her hand. Then I strove to find words to speak my gratitude. But suddenly the door leading to his Grace’s apartments opened, and the Viceroy entered. I could scarce believe my eyes, for with him was Miss Yelverton. Her eyes were downcast and her cheeks were wet as though she had lately wept. Holding her hand, his Grace led her to the Duchess.

“It is a fair penitent,” he said, “and since it is not seemly that so much beauty should kneel to a man, albeit he is the King’s Deputy, I have brought

her hither, Isabel, that she may plead for pardon to the noblest woman in the kingdom."

At this Miss Yelverton knelt before the Duchess.

"Her advocate has pleaded with me already," her Grace answered, "and so I have forgiven her."

"Ha!" cried his Excellency, looking at me for the first time, "a lover is the best and speediest advocate."

Her Grace meanwhile was regarding the bent head before her, as though she struggled with herself. Then she stretched out her arms and raised up Miss Yelverton.

"My dear," she said, and her voice was very sweet, "we all need mercy and forgiveness, and so I forgive you."

Then she kissed her, and Beatrix, bursting into tears, fell upon her neck, and cried out—

"I have loved you, madam, but thought only to serve my country."

At this the Viceroy turned to me.

"Come," he said, "let us leave them together."

So he took my hand, and holding it, led me from

the room until we were come to the council chamber. I was amazed to find there the Lord Chancellor and the Lords Justices of the Kingdom, and would have drawn back, but that his Grace held me fast. As we entered, their lordships rose and made obeisance to the King's Deputy, and he bowed to them.

Then, still holding my hand, he said in a loud voice—

“My lords, I have brought hither one who has rendered great service to the King and his Kingdom of Ireland, so that ye all may testify that his Majesty is not unmindful of services so faithfully rendered. It is his Majesty's desire, expressed through his unworthy Vicegerent, to signify his approval of these services by conferring upon Mr. Theobald Dillon the honour of a baronet.”

At this there were shouts of applause, but I scarce heard them.

Then his Excellency drew his sword, and turning to me, said—

“Kneel down.”

So I knelt down.

“Rise up, Sir Theobald Dillon,” he exclaimed, touching my shoulder lightly with his sword.

When I rose up, their lordships crowded about me, eager to shake my hand and proffer me friendship, as though I had done some notable deed.

But all the while I thought of Beatrix Yelverton.

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